



PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF TRAINING IN AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

Ssekiboobo Agnes Mary and Dr. E.S.K. Muwanga-Zake

**Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics
Makerere University
Kampala, Uganda**

INTRODUCTION: The Global Strategy

The strategy makes it clear that the current situation of agricultural statistics in relation to the coverage, quality and relevance of the data being produced by developing countries is poor and is declining.

The key problem is the limited country-level capacity of public statistical agencies. Increased investment in the human resources available to the statistical system must certainly be part of the response.

There is a concerted effort to put in place a system that will provide the information needed to meet the development challenges of the twenty first century.

All the three pillars on which this system is based have important implications for future investment in training and human resource development.

Introduction: Agricultural Statistics in the initial stages of African Statistical Development

Agricultural Statistics was one of the areas that were given early priority in statistics development.

A good number of countries participated in the 1960 census of Agriculture programme.

At the time there was a marked difference between African statisticians in French and English speaking countries.

Professional training was initially given in overseas institutions. Later a number of professional level centres were created within the region and these provided most of the training required for recruitment of a professional statistician.

SOME OF THE CURRENT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES: THE PROSPECTS

Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics (ISAE)

Training in Agricultural statistics is offered at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels for the Bachelor of Statistics, postgraduate diploma in Statistics and Master of Statistics programmes respectively.

Short term courses and workshops are also offered to meet specific skills needs.

At the present ISAE is reviewing its programmes to make them more relevant to the information needs under different arrangements, decentralization being one of them.

Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre (EASTC)

The curriculum covers some topics of agricultural statistics in the Applied Statistics course which is basically a subset of the Agricultural Statistics course offered at ISAE at the undergraduate level.

SOME OF THE CURRENT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES: THE PROSPECTS

Institut National de Statistique et d' Économie Appliquée (INSEA)

- does not offer any programme in agricultural statistics.
- are proposing creating a specialisation in this area in their four year programme and then go ahead to have a Masters programme in agricultural statistics in collaboration with the Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine Institute.
- are also proposing running short courses in agricultural statistics for public servants in the agriculture and related sectors.

TRAINING OUTSIDE AFRICA:

- The Summer Institute conducted by the Survey Research Centre, Institute of Social Research, University of Michigan, USA offers rigorous and high quality training in all phases of survey research.

The program provides practice and theory in the design, implementation and analysis of surveys

- The Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IASRI) offers under-graduate, Masters and Doctorate degrees plus carrying out research in agricultural statistics and has offered this service for the last 50 years.

The Institute is recognised world wide for its contribution to research and training in agricultural statistics.

- The Statistical Institute of Asia and the Pacific runs both long and short-term courses and plays a central role in national statistical capability in developing countries.

The trainees are trained in the production and development of official statistics for national development, in applications of information management and communications technology for official statistics and in analysis, interpretation and use of official statistics.

The Institute also organises long distance training courses.

TRAINING OUTSIDE AFRICA

- Faculties of Agriculture in Universities:

A number of courses relevant to the training of an agricultural statistician may be offered in these Faculties, which can supplement those offered in training centres very well.

- Other organisations or institutions:

For example the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) and the African Development Bank (ADB) coordinate a number of activities under their statistical capacity building programmes to improve human capital in NSOs (National Statistical Offices) with the former concentrating mostly on OIC member countries and ADB spreading its efforts to the STCs as well.

These activities cover a number of subject areas including agricultural statistics.

CHALLENGES OF IMPROVING THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF TRAINING

- The training of middle level staff.
- Maintaining the quality of products from the statisticians.
- Demand for new statistics as a result of new emerging areas introduced by the global strategy
- Periodically reviewing the course content at all levels and making changes to reflect current priorities and latest data collection and processing methods.
- Challenge of knowing all the stakeholders.
- Challenge of enhancing partnerships for statistical training.
- Retention of Statisticians.
- Challenge of introducing/strengthening modern/existing but cost-effective methodology in the training.
- Lack of demand and supply information to training providers and statistical agencies
- Decentralisation.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT REQUIRED

For:

- Fellowships for both trainers and trainees.
- Research and development of appropriate methodologies.
- Physical infrastructure.
- Development of guide syllabuses and production of relevant teaching materials and periodic review of syllabuses.
- Provision of consultants and visiting lecturers for short periods.
- Support for the holding of seminars, workshops and short courses in priority areas of applied statistics such as agricultural statistics.
- Equipment and accessories.
- Accessing Websites that provide training materials like for FAO and the World Bank.
- Harmonising courses and standards.
- Mentoring.