

## SM E-Business Plan

UNDP and the Government of Japan, through PwC, are providing assistance to Statistics Mauritius in the preparation of an E-business plan under the UNDP Mauritius COVID-19 – Prevention, Response and Early recovery Project (PREP).

Statistics Mauritius (SM) needs to redefine its mode of operations taking into account technological changes, increasing real-time and new data sources, and emergence of competing producers of statistics having unlimited technological competencies and resources. As the roles for NSOs in this new data ecosystems are being discussed at international level, Statistics Mauritius is doomed to adapt to the data driven and digital era to remain relevant vis-à-vis stakeholders' high expectations for relevant and timely high quality data.

PwC the Consulting firm is working with SM in this transformational journey and proposing an e-Business Plan to enhance in its business operations. A Project Steering Committee comprising representatives of UNDP, CISD, CIB, ITSU, GOC, MOFEPD, and Top Management of SM is managing the project.

A situational analysis was conducted based on interviews of SM staff and other key stakeholders to help understand SM current operating model in terms of people, technology and legal framework and to bring to light key challenges and bottlenecks. Benchmarking with more developed national statistical offices (Poland, UK, Australia, Estonia and Rwanda) was also carried out.

The E-business plan is near completion, with the assistance of PwC Poland who is working on a similar project for the national statistics office of Poland. The Plan will be launched towards the end of May, after a series of consultations with key stakeholders, both in the public and the private sector.

## SM is investigating possibilities of the Use of Scanner Data in the computation of CPI in response to COVID-19

With the COVID-19 pandemic restricting mobility of people, price collection for the compilation of Consumer Price Index (CPI), has been disrupted to a large extent. Alternative data collection methods such as telephone survey, web scraping and scanner data have made their ways into the working procedures of national statistical offices worldwide.

SM has adopted telephone surveys to some extent during the lockdown and is now investigating on possibility of using scanner data in the medium term.

Scanner data are data collected by retailers when consumers pay for goods in store. The use of scanner data in the computation of CPI will improve the accuracy of the index as more data become available at low cost. However, for the successful implementation of scanner data in the CPI computation, collaboration of retailers, mostly supermarket chains with high market shares to share their data, appropriate legal framework and skills will be needed.

Many international organizations with the support of countries using a combination of new and traditional data sources in compiling CPI are providing technical assistance on how to use these alternative techniques.

Thus, Statistics Finland has been providing some support in the preliminary work for the use of scanner data. Some virtual meetings have been held and documentation shared with SM. SM will also register as pilot country in the Scanner Data capacity building programme of the UN Economic Commission of Africa.

## SM benefitted from a Training course by the African Institute of Mathematical Sciences on Data Science Capacity Development

In March 2021, Statistics Mauritius benefitted from a training course on Data Science Capacity Development, jointly organised by Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD) partners and African Institute of Mathematical Sciences (AIMS). Some 50 participants from 12 countries on the African continent followed the training course. Statistics Mauritius was represented by five statisticians working across the economic, social and support divisions.

The objective of the training was to build capacity in using Python Programming Language on big data. The following five modules were covered during the training:

- Python for data science
- Data pre-processing
- Data visualisation
- Machine Learning
- Real life used cases

After the training, participating countries were asked to submit a project proposal to be completed within three months with the assistance of AIMS Data Science Fellows. Nine countries including Mauritius submitted a project; only five were retained. Unfortunately, the project of SM was not retained.

The techniques acquired during the course will allow SM to innovate in data visualization using web based and interactive graphs, as well as in modelling and forecasting.

## Participation in the UN Covid-19 Socioeconomic Response Plan Committee

Statistics Mauritius is participating in the Steering Committee and subcommittees of the UN Covid-19 Socio economic Recovery Plan (SERP), prepared by UN Country Team in June 2020, in line with the Secretary General's guidance on the global UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19.

The Plan focuses on three pillars, namely:

- i) Protecting health services and systems during the crisis
- ii) Promote social protection for vulnerable groups
- iii) Socioeconomic assessment and early recovery planning

## IMF Technical assistance mission to improve the Supply and Use Tables (SUTs)

There has been some concern about the growing statistical discrepancy between the two approaches used by SM to measure GDP. IMF has identified the development of annual Supply and Use Tables (SUTs) as a framework to identify data gaps and to reduce the discrepancies.

The IMF TA mission was conducted during 16-26 February 2021. The mission helped to recompile the latest SUTs by addressing the divergence between source data and implementing a three-step procedure to balance the tables, hence reducing the discrepancy to zero.

One of the recommendations of the mission is to integrate compilation of SUTs in routine work. To enhance consistency between the two approaches, compilation of annual SUTs will support preparation of final annual estimates.