



Capacity is Development

Strategic Positioning of the Central Statistical Organisation

CSO to be the key data generator for ANDS

To contribute to the Developmental Challenges of Afghanistan



Data is the lifeline for any system. The absence of adequate quality and quantity of data makes organizations and institutions anemic, leaving them incapable of producing and delivering results. Afghanistan started its reconstruction after decades of conflict in late 2001 and in this process, a key strategic initiative was preparation of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) to guide and move the country on the path of security, peace and sustainable development. The country has high expectations from ANDS and its result-oriented and meaningful implementation requires effective planning, monitoring and evaluation, which in turn requires data and statistics at all levels in all sectors. The Central Statistical Organization (CSO) is the only organization legally mandated to establish, manage and maintain statistical system of the country covering all ministries and organizations through both official statistics systems and surveys/censuses.

Even though CSO is the only organization which can meet all the data requirements of ANDS and ANDS is facing crying need for data, historically, CSO was not given due importance in this regard. Ministry of Economy, which shoulders the responsibility of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of ANDS, did not consider CSO a serious player in the M&E of ANDS. A similar view was echoed by Ministry of Finance and various international organizations. At the same time, a data vacuum for the national plan of Afghanistan was being acutely felt. Furthermore, within CSO there was a lack of clarity regarding its own role vis-à-vis ANDS. The key factor contributing to this lack of appreciation for the existing and potential contributions of CSO was the low capacities within CSO at individual as well as institutional level.

This was the situation when the CAP team started working in CSO. The CAP International Advisor / Coach had previously worked¹ in the JCMB/ANDS Secretariat for monitoring and evaluation of Afghanistan Compact / ANDS and had visited almost all ministries / departments for monitoring of Afghanistan Compact and thus had a clear and complete understanding of the subject. The CAP team with the benefit of the previous experience of its advisor realized that there was a great benefit to be gained for the nation, for ANDS and for CSO, if CSO was positioned strategically to play the very role for which it was mandated. That is, the Role of data generator in Monitoring and Evaluation of ANDS.

The CAP team prepared the road map for achieving the goal of strategic positioning of CSO. At the very start, it conducted the background studies on what CSO was doing, what were its plans in terms of official statistics collection and surveys/censuses, what are its capacities, what were its resources in terms of manpower (both technical and otherwise), infrastructure, network, etc. Once this detailed situation analysis was done, the next major task was awareness generation, both within CSO and in key stakeholders of ANDS. At the same time some of the concerns raised by key stakeholders in the past had to be addressed.

To generate awareness within CSO and to create a sense of ownership, several rounds of discussions were held with the senior management including the President General of CSO about the whole concept of role of CSO in ANDS M&E. A concept paper was prepared on “The Role of Central Statistical Organization in the Monitoring and Evaluation of Afghanistan National development Strategy”. The Paper contained information on the need and urgency of monitoring ANDS, mandate of CSO, role of CSO in ANDS monitoring, activities already being done by CSO towards ANDS and potential activities which can contribute to ANDS M&E.

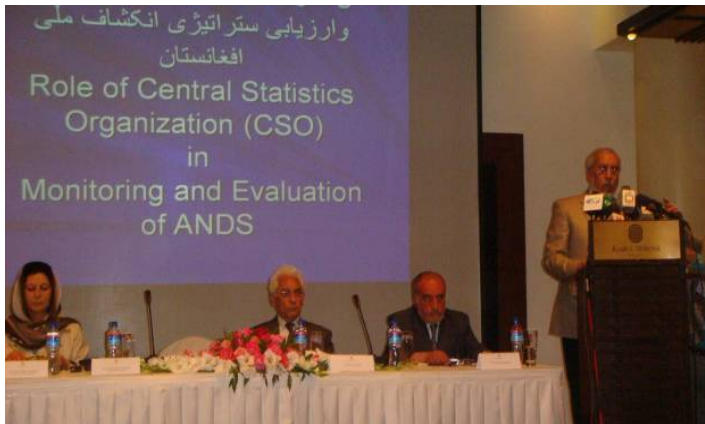
The Paper also included a strategic plan for preparing CSO to do justice to its role for ANDS M&E both in the external environment as well as inside CSO. The paper was initially submitted to the President-General and thereafter a series of presentations were made on it to all presidents and Heads of Departments of CSO. The Presidents of CSO appreciated the new thinking and expressed their readiness to do everything to make it success.

At this stage, a dialogue was also initiated with the key stakeholder, Ministry of Economy using the paper as the starting point. The various concerns expressed by the Ministry were tackled successfully during the course of several discussions.

It was felt by the President General CSO and CAP team that the stage was now set to involve all the other different players like senior dignitaries in the government, international community, NGOs, academicians, etc. It

¹ CAP follows the policy of rotation of its advisors/coaches in different ministries/agencies and also of pooling of the expertise of its advisors. This way more than one ministry/agency of Government of Afghanistan benefits from the services of one advisor/coach.

was planned to organize a Seminar for this purpose. Accordingly, a Seminar was organized with funding from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on 17th of June, 2009 and it received over-whelming response. The Seminar was attended by about 150 people from different important organizations and was widely covered by the Press and Media. The speakers included the First Vice-President of Afghanistan, the Minister of Women Affairs, Presidential Advisor and Director General of High Commission of Over-sight and Anti-corruption, Director General of Independent Directorate of Local Governance, Special Advisor to the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations, Deputy Minister of Economy, representatives of World Bank, ADB, European Commission among others. The President General of CSO, with the assistance of CAP team delivered a very effective presentation on the mandate, activities and role of CSO for ANDS. The Presentation was highly appreciated and worked as an eye-opener for many participants. The primary objective of generating awareness about role of CSO was achieved. The seminar also addressed the concerns of some key stakeholders in the development process of Afghanistan, like UNAMA² and others.



The Seminar was able to strategically position CSO as the data generator for ANDS. At the same time it was also established that the Ministry of Economy would be the data user. CSO got the attention of major stakeholders and started being considered as a major stakeholder in the M&E of ANDS. This strategic positioning of CSO has been a win-win situation for CSO, for ANDS and for the nation as the nation is likely to get benefits of better implementation of ANDS.

UNDP & CAP Project are happy to have contributed to this new and very important beginning in CSO.

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² During the pre seminar discussions, UNAMA had raised the issue of duplication of work and activities. Requisite clarifications and factual situation was provided to UNAMA, which it accepted.