

**COMMEMORATION OF AFRICAN STATISTICS DAY, 2013 ON 20TH NOVEMBER
2013 AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM HALL**

**TALKING NOTES BY PROF SAMWEL WANGWE FROM RESEARCH AND
POVERTY ALLEVIATION (REPOA)**

REPOA is one of the Research Institutions in Tanzania that conducts economic and social researches in the country. Personally, I am a Professional Statistician, a stakeholder and a good user of statistics. Normally, researches are conducted in order to create awareness/ understanding of the society and the Government on issues related to economic and social development in the country. However, the outcomes of any research should be disseminated to stakeholders for planning and policy formulation.

The second step after planning is to monitor the implementation, but how can one track performance without statistics? We can't just say that we have performed well without statistical justification. Quality data are needed to justify the performance and one way of getting the data is through research. Research outcomes, can also be used to adjust planned programs that have been difficult to implement.

Research work is impossible without data. As a research institution, REPOA collects primary data, but to a larger extent uses secondary data gathered by professional statisticians to derive important indicators necessary for development planning and decision making.

Research work must be carried out consistently with statistical work. Statistics help to measure the rate of economic growth and development in general. Most often people speak without data. For example, I heard from a leader of one district that their plan is to raise the rate of growth of the district economy by 10 percent. I wanted to know the economic growth rate of that district for that particular year but he/she did not have the data. I learnt that limited statistical knowledge may mislead users of statistics. One may not predict about the future without having the basic knowledge of the current situation. Statistics tells about the current status, and provide a guide on future predictions.

There is also the issue of accountability as mentioned by the Hon MP. Accountability could be impossible without statistics. In this aspect both Government and stakeholders in statistics are responsible because at the end of the day one must be able to tell statistically, the levels of performance. That, if we have agreed on the implementation of certain programs within a certain timeframe using agreed resources, then at the end of the day, the responsible parties should carry out an evaluation on the level of achievement, and in case performance is below optimal, then implementing agent must be accountable.

What are the existing challenges?

First is the involvement or participation in the provision of quality statistics. We normally say data collection is for the National Bureau of Statistics, forgetting that their success depends greatly on the participation of all stakeholders. I concur with the statement made by the Police Force representative that NBS is capable of providing best statistical solutions.

Second is the availability/distribution of nationwide statistics. Most of the data users think that the Government is the only user of statistics, but in reality, statistics should be available and used from the lowest levels of administration, i.e. villages and hamlets. Note that these are producers and users of statistics. At the village level data on population, livestock, etc, are available but are they of good quality and adequate? There is a need of adopting bottom up approaches in data collection and dissemination.

I am impressed that young statisticians from the Eastern Africa Statistical Training Center (EASTC) are among the invited guests today. These are our future statisticians and the issue of quality statistics should be one of their priority issues in statistical production. In fact statisticians are needed at different administrative levels throughout the country in order to facilitate access of information from lower levels. This will simplify access to data on the spot rather than waiting for the censuses or surveys. In this way, I believe that it is possible to meet quality data requirements.

Third, I would like to address unemployment statistics in relation to the real situation. You can hear on platforms that we want to increase employment, create some jobs but unfortunately up to date data on the levels of employment is unavailable. Consequently, it is impossible to provide an immediate answer on the extent to which we would like to raise the levels of employment. Like in some other countries, data on employment, productivity and income distribution should be collected more frequently (annually or quarterly) rather than in

five years periods. More frequent data is useful for users to identify the country's current status and predict on the future direction. Therefore, if we care about jobs and living standards of the people we must collect information on employment status, income and living standards of the people more frequently.

I insist on the availability of timely statistics. As a matter of fact, availability of timely statistics is a challenge in many African Countries. In most cases the data available is too old for researchers, e.g. from 2010 backward. I am pleased that the National Bureau of Statistics has improved in terms of providing timely statistics, e.g. data on real income for year 2012 is currently available. At least one year lag can be reasonable than five years or more. So let us join efforts to ensure availability of timely statistics for policy formulation and evidence based decision making.

Nowadays, opportunities for ICT and related services are many. Hopefully, through ICT, data collection processes can be improved so that quality statistics will be made available to all stakeholders.

Finally, although the National Bureau of Statistics Statistical coordinates statistical activities in the country, everyone should contribute to improve the quality of data they supply to the NBS so that we can get accurate, reliable, accessible and timely statistics to support Tanzania as well as African progress.