**Improving Household Surveys for Monitoring Development Goals**

Draft, June 4, 2014

In developing countries, household surveys are the main and in some cases the only source of data on household living standards and are the source of data for 27 of the MDG indicators (Annex A). They are also a critical source of information for the compilation of national accounts, consumer price indices, and other socio-economic indicators, and a critical input for research on development issues.

Multiple assessments of the availability and quality (comparability, reliability, timeliness) of the MDG and other key socio-economic indicators estimates have shown major gaps and issues. In developing countries, national survey programs often rely on ad-hoc external funding and technical assistance, resulting in data gaps in some countries, and duplication of efforts and inconsistent estimates in others. Furthermore, the lack of standards and inadequate coordination among development partners have translated into poor harmonization and comparability across countries and overtime. Survey design is often not consistently compliant with international standards and good practices, resulting in low quality and conflicting figures. The MDGs had raised awareness to these issues and increased support to capacity building; as a result, statistical capacity and data availability have improved over time. Yet data gaps and quality issues remain significant, and must be addressed in a more coordinated way to guarantee a better monitoring of the post-2015 development agenda. The on-going post-2015 discussions create a unique opportunity to critically assess the adequacy of current household survey systems and provide a platform for much needed changes.

At the 45th session of the United Nations Statistics Commission (UNSC 2014), representatives of low and middle income countries requested the UNSC to include in its future program of work the improvement of household surveys, given their critical role in providing data for the post-2015 development agenda and for policy analysis in support of the broad development agenda. Household surveys were regularly at the agenda of the UNSC during the period 1983-1993 (Annex B), when the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP), the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) and the Social Dimension of Adjustment (SDA) initiatives were created and active. Since then, except for very sparse exceptions, household surveys have not been in the agenda of the UNSC. To reverse this trend, and to spearhead an inter-institutional effort to improve the availability and quality of household surveys for the monitoring of broad measure of progress, the UNSC has commissioned a report describing the current state of the art in household surveys, identify gaps and lay out a multi-annual program of work. The World Bank offered to take lead in a consultative process to prepare the report for the Commission’s consideration in 2015.

This note proposes a draft outline for the report, and suggestions for contributions by agencies interested in participating in its production. The report to the UNSC is expected to be ready by November 2014, and be a 20-page document, complemented by Annexes and background documentation.

**DRAFT OUTLINE**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

* Rationale for the note, and objectives
* Quick summary of the evolving demands for HHS
* Summary of the main supply-side constrains such as main data gaps and what contributes to these gaps

**II. TOPIC-SPECIFIC ISSUES**

*This section will be a summary of contributions by specialized agencies on issues related to the collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of household survey data related to three to four selected sectors/topics. The objective of this section is not to provide an exhaustive assessment of survey issues by topic. It is to provide readers with an idea of the range of issues in household surveys – and possible solutions. Additional topics could be covered subsequently if so required for moving the agenda forward. The topics to be covered would be selected based on (i) commitment by contributing organization to prepare a background paper; (ii) importance of the topic in the context of MDG and the post-2015 agenda; (iii) availability of existing assessments or background documentation of survey issues. The possible topics include (in no particular order of importance):*

* + Poverty and inequality (household consumption/expenditure, and prices; multidimensional poverty)
  + Food security and nutrition
  + Health (with reference to the Universal Health Coverage initiative)
  + Education
  + Labor and social protection (with reference to the 2013 ICLS)
  + Household income (including from farm and non-farm enterprises)
  + Agriculture
  + Migration
  + Infrastructure (WATSAN, energy, ICT)
  + Gender

**III. GENERAL CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES**

1. **Sustainability and predictability of survey programs**
   * *Integration in statistical agencies’ work programs*
   * *The cost (affordability) of surveys (including a discussion on what drives increases in survey costs, such as demand for more granular data). If possible, report on trends in survey costs (this may be difficult)*
2. **Harmonization of concepts, methods and classifications within countries**
   * *Highlight existing initiatives and some examples of quick wins and long-term research in selected topics*
3. **Integration of surveys with other data sources (censuses, administrative, other surveys, geo-spatial data, …)**
   * *Describe successful examples of integration and gaps/area of further research*
   * *Imputations*
   * *Integration of socio-economic and environmental variables*
4. **Sampling and related issues**

* *Sample size (demand for sub-national data vis-à-vis non-sampling errors)*
* *Quality of sample frames*
* *“Smart” sampling design, multivariate/multi-purpose, master frames, etc.*

1. **Use of technology (CAPI, GPS, mobile phones, etc.) for improving data quality and timeliness**
2. **Microdata dissemination and documentation**
   * *Metadata*
   * *Main initiatives*
   * *Expanding the user of HHS*
3. **Coordination / governance of international support to survey programs**
   * *Current landscape*
   * *How to coordinate better?*
   * *What role for the IHSN, or other mechanisms?*
   * *Dependency on external funding – Programs for results*
   * *If possible, report on changes over time: are countries financing more today than before?*

**IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Summarize “quick wins” for immediate/short-term gains

Map the way forward (needed technical/methodological and institutional changes)

**Suggestions to contributing agencies for the preparation of background papers**

Each of the nine topic-specific sub-sections in SECTION II is expected to be a summary of a contributed paper prepared by a partner agency. The paper would report on:

* Broad description of current landscape in specific topic in terms of agencies, instruments, initiatives, …
* Document availability, or lack thereof, of international standard survey methods and classifications for the particular topic of interest, and identification of areas where new guidelines/methodological research is needed
* Country practices: to what extent do national agencies comply with international standards and best practices? Do what degree development partners are working together in supporting countries?
* Report on data gaps by country (are surveys conducted regularly with the appropriate frequency?)
* Issues of comparability / harmonization
* Other issues of data quality
* Accessibility to microdata
* Identification of quick wins (where can we address some of the problems quickly?)
* Longer term research agenda and possible practical next steps

Proposed lead contributors for the proposed topics (three to four topics to be selected; each contributor would identify other relevant agencies that can provide input to their paper):

**SECTION II:**

* **Poverty and inequality (household consumption/expenditure, and prices; multidimensional poverty)** - World Bank with input from FAO on food consumption. This contribution will build on the IHSN assessment of food consumption surveys, to be complemented by an assessment of non-food expenditure data. It will also build on multiple existing assessments of monetary poverty data.
* **Food Security and Nutrition** – FAO with inputs from World Bank. This contribution will also build on the IHSN assessment of food consumption surveys to be complemented by other FNS indicators.
* **Health** – WHO and UNICEF (this contribution will build on an assessment of health surveys currently implemented by WHO and the World Bank for the IHSN)
* **Education** – UNESCO Institute of Statistics
* **Labor and social protection** (with reference to the 2013 ICLS) - ILO
* **Household income** (including from farm enterprises) – World Bank
* **Agriculture** – FAO and World Bank
* **Migration** – IOM and World Bank/KNOMAD project
* **Infrastructure** (WATSAN, energy, ICT) – JMP (water/sanitation), World Bank
* **Gender** – UNSD (this report will take advantage of the gender meta-database produced by the IHSN).
* **Household surveys in NSS and the NSDS** – PARIS21 (cover issues of governance and sustainability of systems, including costs)

For **SECTION III**, the World Bank would lead the drafting, and request input from other agencies as relevant.

All contributing agencies will be asked to review the draft report when ready. Two external peer-reviewers will be identified and asked to provide detailed comments on the draft.

Note: The World Bank had conducted an inventory of surveys (DHS, MICS, WHS, LFS, HIES, LSMS, and socio-economic surveys) and population censuses for the period 2000-2011 for the purpose of identifying data gaps in poverty measurement. This inventory will be updated by the Bank then shared with all contributors, who will be asked to check the comprehensiveness of the inventory and update it when necessary. An on-line version of this inventory will be part of the report.

**Annex A – Household-based MDG indicators**

1. Proportion of population below $1 (PPP) per day

2. Poverty gap ratio [incidence x depth of poverty]

3. Share of poorest quintile in national consumption

4. Prevalence of underweight children under-five years of age

5. % of pop. below min. level of dietary energy consumption

6. Net enrollment ratio in primary education

7. Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5

8. Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds

9. Ratios of girls/ boys in primary, secondary, tertiary education

10. Ratio of literate females to males of 15-24 year-olds

11. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector

13. Under-five mortality rate

14. Infant mortality rate

15. Proportion of 1 yr.-old children immunized against measles

16. Maternal mortality ratio

17. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel

18. HIV prevalence among 15-24 year old pregnant women

19. Condom use rate of the contraceptive prevalence rate

20. Number of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS

22. % of population using effective malaria prevention/treatment

29. Proportion of population using solid fuels

30. % of population with sustainable access to an improved water source

31. % of urban population with access to improved sanitation

32. Proportion of households with access to secure tenure

45. Unemployment rate of 15-24 year-olds, each sex and total

47. Telephone lines, cellular subscribers per 1000 population

48. Personal computers in use and internet users per 1000 pop.

**Annex B – Household surveys in the UNSC agenda (1983-2014)**

* 1983: Report of the Secretary-General on the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP) - 22nd session - E/CN.3/1983/20
* 1985: Report of the Secretary-General on National Household Survey Capability Programme - E/CN.3/1985/14
* 1985: Report of the World Bank on Living Standards Measurement Programme - E/CN.3/1985/15
* 1987: Report of the Secretary-General on National Household Survey Capability Programme - E/CN.3/1987/19
* 1987: Report of the World Bank on prototype surveys of the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) - E/CN.3/1987/20
* 1989: Report of the Secretary-General on long-range future of the National Household Survey Capability Programme - E/CN.3/1989/18
* 1989: Report of the World Bank on the World Bank initiatives in the design of permanent integrated household surveys - E/CN.3/1989/19
* 1991: Report of the Secretary-General on progress in implementation and coordination of the National Household Survey Capability Programme - E/CN.3/1991/26
* 1991: Report of the World Bank on the World Bank initiatives in the design of permanent integrated household surveys - E/CN.3/1991/27
* 1993: Report of the Secretary-General on progress made in the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP), the Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA) Programme and the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) - E/CN.3/1993/18 and E/CN.3/1993/19
* 2001: Gender statistics - progress on time-use surveys - E/CN.3/2001/4