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## **ANNEXTURE-V**

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### **STATISTICAL SYSTEM OF SOUTH AFRICA**

The South African statistical system is nearly 100 years old, but has only served the needs of all its peoples for a relatively short period. The advent in 1994 of the democratic dispensation provided the production of statistics with two organisational model options for transformation. The first model was to centralise the production of most of the statistics into a single agency, the national statistical office (NSO) which was the then Central Statistical Service (CSS). The CSS was later transformed into Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) consisting of a head office and branches in the provinces; and much later on regional offices were established at sub-provincial level. The minority of the statistics excluded from centralisation were largely of a financial nature such as the balance of payments. These would be generated by the relevant agencies including the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) and the National Treasury (NT). Indeed the feeling that centralisation was the way to go was prevalent both within Stats SA and in other organs of state. The second model was to decentralise the production of most of the statistics whereby the various organs of state would produce statistics on the basis of their specialist subject areas. Naturally statistics-producing organs of state would constitute a statistical production system which would require coordination.

The model ultimately adopted was a product of an evolutionary process. Statistical production faced four major pressures which overlapped in some areas. First was ideological transformation from a focus on "own affairs" of the apartheid political dispensation to a focus on integration of the total population and geography of the new state. This translated into transformation of the demographics of the CSS, integration of the bantustan statistics offices into the CSS, and establishment of provincial CSS offices to facilitate data collection by head office. Second was the data gap facing the new government with regard to policy and programme development. Alleviation of poverty and inequality, especially service delivery, and the provision of developmental opportunities was unquestionably urgent. This provided the imperative for the 1996 census of population and housing. Third was the rationalisation of the statistical series produced so they could be relevant to the aspirations of the citizenry. The rationalisation included the introduction of the production of social statistics in addition to the existing economic statistics. Fourth was the drive to improve the quality of the statistics produced by the NSO.

Although they are still around at different levels of intensity, the pressures mentioned above were most intense during, and coincided with, the tenure (1995-99) of the first head of the CSS which later became Stats SA. During this period the transformation model of statistical production was the centralised one. However, over time it had become increasingly clear that Stats SA had very limited capacity to cater for most of statistical needs of users. In the same breath the potential of other organs of state for filling the gap between what Stats SA produced and what users needed was recognised. Acknowledgement of the limitations of the centralised model in principle led to a re-orientation towards the coordination model, which culminated in the enactment of the current Statistics Act (No. 6 of 1999). The Act specifically provided for a Statistician-General as executive head of Stats SA as well as coordinator of statistics produced by other organs of state. It was a landmark in the production of statistics in the country because it defined a new direction for the strategic and work programmes of Stats SA as well as as well as defining the role of other organs of state in the production of statistics. Incidentally the Act coincided with the change of name of the NSO from CSS to Stats SA.

In 2000 a new head took over the reins at Stats SA and immediately embarked on a new vision for statistical production in the country. Although the new vision was as yet to be formally defined, it was hinged on coordination of statistical production. A National Statistics System Division (NSSD) was established at Stats SA to tease out the coordination process. The NSS concept became a Cabinet decision at the Cabinet Lekgotla of January 2002. Although the SANSS was included in the Programme of Action (POA) of the government, for the next eight years or so it lacked prominence especially at Stats SA for three main reasons. First was the relatively perennial capacity constraint. Second and most significant was the continued pressure to get Stats SA as an entity to work more effectively and efficiently with particular regard to the quality of its own products. The third was the challenge of change management.

It was not until 2009 that the NSS concept influenced the strategic direction of Stats SA. Since then the department's five-year strategic plan and the annual work programme have undergone a strategic shift that emphasises implementation of statistical coordination as mandated by the Statistics Act [3, 4]. As its new vision and mission indicate, the department has assumed a leadership position by partnering with other organs of state to advance statistical development in the country. The shift has been the widening of statistical production beyond the products of Stats SA to setting up a system to support other organs of state to produce statistics of good quality. The objectives of the shift are to expand the production of statistics in order to increase the supply of official statistics and to address the gap in statistical quality. Of the six strategic objectives of Stats SA, three directly address statistical coordination. The first objective is "to expand the information base by increasing its depth, breadth and geographic spread". The strategy is to translate the government's 12 priority development outcomes identified in the Cabinet Lekgotla of 20-22 January 2010 [5] into Stats SA's 10 statistical themes that constitute the universe of statistical production [3:30] (see Table 1). Strategic focus areas include health, education, safety and security, sustainable resource management, rural development, food security and land reform. The second objective is "to enhance public confidence and trust in statistics". Focus areas for this objective include developing a quality management system for the SANSS, setting standards for the SANSS, assessing statistics for quality and certifying them as official where applicable, and development and maintenance of dwelling and business frames for standardising data collection areas to enhance data comparability. The third objective is "to lead the development and coordination of statistical production within the SANSS". This is where the SANSS performs a transformation function of the fragmented statistical system to an integrated one focused on the production of official statistics.