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**Institutional Arrangements for Producing Macroeconomic Statistics in
Countries Subscribing to the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS)**

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1. The paper presents the results of a survey of the institutional arrangements for producing official macroeconomic statistics. The survey covers 41 countries subscribing to the IMF's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS)—with well-developed national statistical systems. It demonstrates the prevalence of multiple institutional responsibilities for producing macroeconomic datasets with an overall lead role for the national statistical agency. Most data-producing agencies work within well-defined legal frameworks, an important basis for integrity and professional independence of statistical agencies.

Survey of SDDS subscribers on their institutional arrangements

2. A survey of SDDS member countries was conducted in November 2006 to shed light on the institutional and legal arrangements for producing and disseminating macroeconomic statistics (Dziobek and Tanase, forthcoming 2007). Most, but not all, of the countries that subscribe to the IMF's SDDS have well-developed national statistical systems. An important purpose of the survey was to better understand the division of labor among data-producing agencies in advanced economies to provide some benchmarks for countries that aspire to join the SDDS. It is widely recognized that clarity of institutional roles and professional independence of statistical agencies are core ingredients for producing high-quality and impartial statistics (UN Fundamental Principles; IMF Data Quality Assessment Framework). The survey, therefore, was focused on the institutional roles and their legal underpinnings, as well as on interagency cooperation agreements governing areas of common responsibility. In the survey questions, a distinction was made between the responsibilities for collection and dissemination of data as these are sometimes not with the same agencies. In many countries, for example, the national statistical agency disseminates data on government finance statistics while these data are produced by another agency, often the finance ministry. This

distinction would appear to be relevant because such separations require added collaboration agreements. Some references are made to how well SDDS countries' legal and institutional frameworks fare in data Reports on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSCs), which are comprehensive assessments of data quality of macroeconomic statistics. An extension of this study would be a more systematic analysis of these quality reports, which would allow more conclusive evidence about links between institutional structure and performance.

3. Some of the survey results confirm information that is publicly available on the IMF's Data Dissemination Standard Bulletin Board (DSBB), where SDDS subscribers provide contact information and agencies for each of the datasets covered by the standards, although such contact information does not have to follow the formal legal responsibility. The DSBB is also a valuable resource for further research on this subject as the detailed metadata on the institutional and legal arrangements now follow the structure of the Data Quality Assessment Framework, which allows cross country or cross topic searches by the various quality indicators.

4. This survey covered national accounts; consumer price statistics; producer price statistics; general government operations; depository corporations survey; balance of payments; and international investment position. Of the 64 SDDS member countries, 41 responded to the survey. The main findings of the survey are summarized below.

The institutional arrangements in the majority of the SDDS countries

5. The national statistical office is the main data producing agency for national accounts and price statistics in over 80 percent of countries, while the central bank is the main agency for producing banking and monetary data (depository corporations survey) in all SDDS countries, data on the international investment position (about 83 percent of countries), and balance of payments statistics (about 78 percent). For balance of payments statistics, about 22 percent of respondents indicated that the main producing agency is the statistical office. For general government statistics, the institutional arrangements in the SDDS countries are more diverse. The main data producing agency for government finance statistics is the ministry of finance in close to 70 percent of countries, the statistical office in about 24 percent, and the central bank in about 7 percent of the countries (see Table 1).

The role of the central bank

6. As noted above, the 'mainstream' model has the national statistical agency as the main producer of economic statistics while the central bank is responsible for a more specialized set of statistics. Exceptions are countries in Central America (and one in South America), where the central banks produce all or almost all statistics. A further analysis of these countries' performance was done by consulting available data ROSCs for these countries. These suggest that the approach followed in Central America is more the result of pragmatic initiatives by central banks than design. It appears that the central banks took on the responsibilities for producing virtually all macroeconomic data to fill a void and in view

Table 1: Agencies Producing/Disseminating Main Datasets in SDDS Countries

	Datasets													
	National Accounts		Consumer Price Statistics		Producer Price Statistics		General Government Statistics		Depository Corporations Survey		Balance of Payments		International Investment Position	
	Producing Agency	Disseminating Agency	Producing Agency	Disseminating Agency	Producing Agency	Disseminating Agency	Producing Agency	Disseminating Agency	Producing Agency	Disseminating Agency	Producing Agency	Disseminating Agency	Producing Agency	Disseminating Agency
Number of countries														
Statistical office	34	34	38	36	35	34	10	13	0	3	9	11	7	9
Central bank	4	4	1	2	4	4	3	5	41	37	32	29	34	31
Ministry of finance	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	22	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	3	3	2	3	2	3	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
Total number of countries	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41
In percent of all countries														
Statistical office	83	83	93	88	85	83	24	32	0	7	22	27	17	22
Central bank	10	10	2	5	10	10	7	12	100	90	78	71	83	76
Ministry of finance	0	0	0	0	0	0	68	54	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	7	7	5	7	5	7	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

of weak and poorly endowed national statistical agencies. In these countries, the central banks generally lack a clear legal mandate. Nevertheless, this approach has produced tangible success in producing economic statistics, and it may bear some lessons particularly for small countries.

Interagency coordination

7. The survey suggests that in most of the SDDS countries, firm cooperation agreements are in place between the statistical offices and other agencies that supply data required as input. For the compilation of national accounts, the statistical office often notes cooperation with the ministry of finance (on data pertaining to government operations), central bank, or other agencies that are contributing data. Similarly, for external sector statistics, shared responsibility is prevalent and special cooperation agreements are in place between the national statistical agency and the central bank. Often, special agreements between statistical agencies involve the ministry of finance or another agency which compiles external debt statistics. Table 1 shows differences between producing and disseminating agencies. For national accounts, producing agencies in all countries are also responsible for disseminating the data. In a few countries, the consumer price index data are produced by the national statistical agency but disseminated by either the central bank or by other agencies. Similarly, central banks are more often engaged in producing balance of payments statistics than they are in disseminating them. This suggests that many of the cooperation agreements currently in place address or clarify these divisions of labor.

The legal basis for assigning responsibilities to institutions and interagency collaborations

8. The survey responses indicate that a law is the most common legal basis for assigning responsibilities for economic data. This holds for over 90 percent of the statistical offices, central banks, and the ministry of finance. Additional arrangements are noted by 11 statistical offices, 7 central banks and 3 ministries of finance. These arrangements include memoranda of understanding, official agreements, or established practices and in most countries supplement the legal framework.

9. Various mechanisms are in place to foster inter-agency coordination. The most common mechanism, as indicated by about 70 percent of the SDDS survey responses, relates to working groups. Another mechanism indicated by the survey responses are statistical committees and statistical councils (about 17 percent of responses). In addition, some other mechanisms described in the survey responses are ad hoc expert meetings; regular meetings; consultation by telephone; cooperation based on mutual trust; operational agreements such as Memoranda of Understanding or Official Agreements.

Can conclusions be drawn on a preferred model institutional structure for producing official statistics?

10. SDDS countries have relatively complex structures to produce economic statistics but with strong emphasis on clearly defined roles and good governance. The group of SDDS countries appears to have opted for systems where a national statistical agency takes the lead while other institutions, including the central bank have a subsidiary role. However, there are some noteworthy exceptions where the central bank plays a central role and these are worth further study as they may have lessons for other countries. The role of other data providing agencies is also important through the various arrangements that are in place. This mainstream institutional setting appears to recognize, at least in principle, the importance of separating the production and dissemination of statistics from policy making, and thus the independence of official statistics from the policy and political sphere. The principle of integrity thus sets some important boundaries for developing effective statistical systems.

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