

IAOS Interview with Charles Leyeka Lufumpa, retiring Director of the Statistics Department at AfDB by Misha Belkindas

Misha Belkindas, IAOS President Elect, Managing Director of ODW Consulting and former manager of DECDG of World Bank spoke to the outgoing Director of Statistics at the AfDB, Dr Leyeka Charles Lufumpa about his three decades career at this institution.

But first let us get some of what his colleagues say about him

Professor Ben Kiregyera the founding Director of Statistics Centre at UNECA had this to say about him having associated with Charles for almost a quarter of a century “We salute Charles on his lifelong dedicated service to and achievements in the promotion of statistical development and their use in Africa and internationally. We go forth with promise and energized by the great work done by this statistics giant.”

Chief Oladejo Ajayi a retiree and former head of the statistics office in the biggest nation in Africa, Nigeria echoed the sentiments of Ben Kiregyera as he said “Charles has a pleasant disposition, he is calm and thoughtful and always helpful and busy building bridges, never focusing on himself but on programmes of immense overall benefits to the region. He is a very decent personality, always putting across his views without any drama. A team player as well as an effective leader- indeed a transformational leader who got the work done.

Pali Lehohla the retired founding chairperson of the Africa Symposium for Statistical Development (ASSD) and former Statistician-General of South Africa has this to say about Charles – Dr Charles Lufumpa structured the most innovative funding model for statistics in Africa. This was an envy in all regions. On the downside, Charles like most statistics offices in Africa and

the world, led a boy’s choir, and a gender lens is urgently needed and this is a matter for his successor.

Yusuf Murangwa Yusuf Director General of the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda says “I wish I could find one word that covers everything that he is! Wise, supportive, dedication, commitment, truthful, positive, . . . ‘*Intore*’ (in Kinyarwanda means a man of integrity, and a noble person. A person who is heroic, a person who, can actually stand up to the challenge, and do things. In Kinyarwanda, ‘intore’ means someone with great moral integrity).”

Alex Shimufena the Statistician-General of Namibia says “His accessibility, generosity, humility and guidance will always be treasured by Namibia and I believe by the African Statistical fraternity at large. Go well Charles and please keep your door open for continuous support and advice.”

Oliver Chinganya the Director of Statistics Center at the ECA has this to say about Charles “The personal and professional relationship has continued even when I moved to the UN Economic Commission for Africa in 2016. We have continued to work together in a number of complimentary statistical programmes and I must say, he has been instrumental in ensuring that all heads of statistical offices attend the Statistical Commission for Africa. Dr. Lufumpa made sure that the Bank provides financial support. His contribution in statistical development has been nothing short of phenomenal. I salute him, and I look forward to further engaging him in his new endeavour.”

Interview with Dr. Lyeke Charles Lufumpa by Misha Belkindas

Misha Belkindas: Charles, how did you come to the fraternity of official statistics? Is AfDB statistics de-



Fig. 1. Dr. Lyeka Charles Lufumpa.

partment the first place you worked in statistics or was something else before? And what did you do (studies, work) before you started your carrier in official statistics?

Charles Lufumpa: My academic background is in economics with statistics as my minor. I was very fascinated with statistics and quantitative methods at a very early age, so I stuck with this combination right from my bachelor's degree studies at the University of Zambia up to my Master's degree and Ph.D. studies at Iowa State University (ISU) in the USA. My first job was as a policy economist with the Government of Zambia. I was later seconded to ISU for 8 months as a visiting research economist. I joined the AfDB in March 1992 as an economist-statistician working on poverty and environmental policy issues. After some 5 years in the bank, I was asked to lead the AfDB statistics team and this is the job I have held up to now. So as you can see, I come more from the consumer side of statistics, not the producer side.

Misha Belkindas: We met first time more than 20 years ago, I believe "plotting" capacity building program together – AfDB and World Bank. Any reflection on the partnership?

Charles Lufumpa: Indeed, I have very fond memories of our partnership which helped the AfDB team to ratchet up our statistical capacity building work within the Bank & across Africa. I remember that our first major collaboration was in 1999 on the live database initiative which helped the AfDB to set up its first centralized data management & dissemination system. Our next major collaboration was on the International Comparison Program (ICP) in 2002, when AfDB took over

responsibility from Eurostat for ICP activities in Africa – the first time an African institution took lead responsibility for this work. We used this opportunity as a platform for initiating our statistical capacity building work in African countries, starting with national accounts and price statistics and then moving into other statistical domains over the years. This enabled AfDB to propel itself to become one of the major players on statistical development issues in Africa. Sure, the partnership with the World Bank was in a way quite instrumental in helping the AfDB to position itself as a partner of choice on statistical development issues in Africa. In this regard, I wish to acknowledge the personal support I received from you, Shaida Badiee, Eric Swanson and others in the World Bank ICP and data management teams. That really helped to encourage me on and push through the changes that needed to be made at AfDB at the time.

Misha Belkindas: During your tenure many good things happened in statistics on the African continent – which project you like most and consider a success and which project you consider a failure?

Charles Lufumpa: I think our work on ICP has yielded the best results in terms of fostering statistical capacity in African countries, particularly in national accounts and price statistics. Working with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the African Union Commission (AUC), we have also been successful in utilizing our convening power to rally African countries to come together and work together towards common goals. For instance, we were active sponsors – along with ECA, AUC and StatsSA – of the African Symposium for Statistical Development (ASSD), which for the 2010 population and housing census round, helped us to achieve the highest participation rate ever by African countries in the history of census taking. Our leadership on NSDS work has also yielded a lot of results by providing African countries a framework for effective coordination of statistical development efforts in their countries. Through this, we have been able to do a lot of advocacy work at high policy levels, which has helped to encourage the prioritization of statistics in many African countries. This in turn has helped to mobilize more resources for statistical development work across Africa. More notably, the increase in funding has come from African countries themselves as policy makers see the importance of investing in good statistics for evidence-based decision making.

One other key success I can cite is the work we have done in revolutionizing data management and dissem-

ination systems across Africa through our Africa Information Highway initiative. Through this initiative, we have been able to provide all African countries and sub-regional organizations live data links for their own data management and dissemination needs and to facilitate seamless exchange of data with other partners. In this regard, the partnership with the IMF has done a lot to make many African countries adhere to the enhanced General Data Dissemination Standards of the IMF – a feat that has in turn helped to ensure the availability of more timely and quality data for decision making by economic actors. In other words, this has helped to put critical data for decision making at the fingertips of policy makers and millions of other data users.

As for failures, I think it's the realization that despite the hard work we have put in and the successes we have scored, there is still so much to do to build effective statistical capacity in Africa, particularly in the fragile or transition states. The statistical challenges in Africa are still enormous and we need to stay the course if we are to make headway in sustaining the improvements that we are beginning to see in the African statistical landscape. I am heartened, however, to see the determination of colleagues in NSOs and partner institutions who are ever ready to soldier on and build on the current successes.

***Misha Belkindas:** Charles, how did you succeed in forging partnerships with regional and international organizations to deliver aid in statistics?*

Charles Lufumpa: The progress we have made in fostering statistical development in Africa could not have been possible without solid partnerships within Africa and with our partners from outside. Our modus operandi at AfDB has always been to value partnerships in our work. This is why we designed and implemented our first major program, the ICP, as a partnership platform, involving key institutions from within and outside Africa. We work very closely with AUC, ECA and sub-regional organizations like COMESA, ECOWAS, SADC, AMU, EAC, Afristat, to coordinate our statistical work in Africa. But we have also forged very close working relationships with multilateral partners like UNSD, WB, IMF, FAO, ILO, Paris21, just to name a few, in various statistical domains. The statistical challenges in Africa remain enormous and no one partner can do an effective job on their own. We therefore need to nurture effective partnerships for us to continue making meaningful progress, and the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA) provides us a good platform for forging such partnerships.

***Misha Belkindas:** How well you think you and your organization served your main clients – national statistical systems?*

Charles Lufumpa: I think we can rightfully take some credit for the progress that we are seeing in Africa in areas such as national accounts, price statistics, data management and dissemination, agricultural statistics, infrastructure statistics, strategic planning, enhanced survey programs – to mention just a few. But as I indicated earlier, the credit is not ours alone. We must applaud the countries for stepping up their efforts and the various partners within and outside Africa who have worked with us to make some meaningful difference in the statistical landscape across Africa. The trajectory is in the right direction, but more work remains to be done. In this regard, we need to sustain our resolve to ensure effective implementation of the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA).

***Misha Belkindas:** Charles, how did you navigate internal Bank's bureaucracy securing and disbursing funds?*

Charles Lufumpa: When I took over responsibility for statistical work at AfDB in 1997, the Bank's statistical activities were limited to just providing data support to other AfDB Units. The Bank was not involved in any statistical capacity building (SCB) activities in African countries. I thought right from the start that the Bank was punching way below its weight and needed to scale up its statistical activities, including providing support to African countries. The launching of our ICP work in Africa in 2002 provided us an opportunity to start engaging with African countries and to help them build capacity in statistical domains like national accounts and price statistics. Mobilizing resources internally, however, was always a big challenge due to the many competing needs for the Bank's resources. We faced a lot of push back from some colleagues in the Bank who thought putting money in SCB work would not yield best value for money. It took a lot of cajoling and advocacy work to finally convince senior management and our Board to provide the necessary funding for the Bank to start supporting statistical activities in African countries. From thereon, subsequent resource mobilization efforts became a bit easier although we have always had to contend with some internal resistance. Luckily, all our Presidents have been darlings of statistics and this made it a bit easier for us to cut through the internal bureaucratic resistance each time we needed to replenish our coffers.

Misha Belkindas: *SDG's and now COVID puts tremendous pressure on national statistical systems. Charles, do you have any advise to NSO, donors and to your current organization – AfDB?*

Charles Lufumpa: I think the irony is that the Covid-19 situation has accentuated the importance of good statistics for informing critical policy decisions aimed at addressing the impacts of the pandemic, including helping vulnerable groups, ensuring that economies are stabilized, and jobs and livelihoods are saved. NSOs need to be proactive in helping to meet the increasing demand for timely and quality data to inform policy decisions during these difficult circumstances. Although standard data collection processes have been disrupted, technology offers other means for continuing data collection efforts and ensuring that NSOs remain relevant and rise to the challenge of meeting the increasing demand for good data. Donors and institutions like the AfDB also moved quickly to provide the necessary support to countries, and statistics were front and center in informing the design of their interventions as well the monitoring and evaluation of the field operations.

Misha Belkindas: *Plans for the immediate future in addition to relieving stress from you current job?*

Charles Lufumpa: I am taking early retirement after a very long and illustrious career in the Bank. I am scheduled to leave the Bank as soon as a replacement for my job is recruited. I thought this could be done by December 2020, but I am now told by HR it will spill into early 2021. I think it is the right time for me to leave so that I give room for the injection of new ideas and new ways of doing business. I plan to head back home to Lusaka, Zambia for a well-deserved rest, away from the day-to-day hassles of the office. I don't plan to do anything for a year or so. As you may already know, my wife and I have not continuously lived in Zambia for almost 36 years now and we want to use this opportunity to just enjoy ourselves and reacquaint ourselves with the lovely Zambian ambience which we have missed so much. We shall also use this opportunity to spend more time with our grown kids who are scattered around the world. Having said this, however, I will remain involved in some way with the statistical fraternity and I look forward to re-engaging with you all soon.

Misha Belkindas: *Anything else you would like to tell what did not ask.*

Charles Lufumpa: None for now.

Misha Belkindas: *was nice to talk to you Charles. As you know there is a world outside AfDB and you got to enjoy it. But I am sure you will feel the urge to get back to the fraternity and do good work on the ground. Good luck.*

Testimonies by six of his peers from the African statistics family

Let us hear the full text from his colleagues which matches almost word for word of what this achiever on the statistical front in Africa says but with extraordinary humility an ordinary mortal can muster.

My first contact with Dr. Lufumpa was about the latter half of the 90s through my compatriot who was his colleague at the AfDB at that time. He was at the head of the statistics team at the Bank. His description of him was pleasant and dedicated.

In year 2000, a team of Consultants carried out the evaluation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action (AAPA) for Statistical Development in Africa and the Evaluation Report was circulated to all stakeholders including the AfDB. Charles Lufumpa used that report to chart out a statistical agenda to support the AfDB.

This was followed by another programme, the International Comparison Programme for Africa (ICP-Africa) as part of the global programme which was brought to AfDB for execution of the African component. He thought that the Statistics Structure of the ECA was better suited to lead that programme. As at the time, the Statistics function couldn't even be recognized within the ECA. This programme was brought back to the AfDB Statistics Unit and Charles took on the challenge of building a Division for Statistics of about 20 professionals in Statistics/Economics and implemented the ICP-Africa and making the African component most elaborate in the global endeavor. This programme in Africa took along with it the overall improvement of the Price Statistics and GDP compilation in Africa. That programme and its successors were huge successes.

Coming out of the ICP-Africa, under Charles management, in collaboration with the remnants of the ECA Statistics, a bold step was undertaken for the development of Reference Regional Strategic Framework (RRSF) for Statistical capacity building in Africa was prepared. This framework guided the development of African Statistics. (Under this framework was the development of strategies).

It was at the presentation and launch of the RRSF document that one of its recommendations indicated

that AfDB would coordinate the implementation of the Framework which caught the eyes of the newly appointed Executive Secretary of the UN-ECA who then wondered why AfDB and not the Statistics function at the ECA? The simple answer was that the structure at UN-ECA was too weak to accomplish this task. It was he, the ES, Janney Abdoulie (2005–2012) that resolved to elevate the Statistics function with the establishment of the Africa Center for Statistics (ACS) and with committed support of Charles' department of Statistics to enable the Center thrive. Charles extended his support to all other structures, programmes in African Statistics, including Statistics structures at the Regional Economic Communities in Africa, Statistical Training Centers in Africa; ASSD, African Union Statistics Unit. Dr. Lufumpa was not interested in having to compete with others on these various initiatives but more focused on collaboration and building all these essential structures and programmes.

His Statistics department served the countries of Africa in supporting their strategies for statistical development through the design of National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDSs) including the development of a guide manual for doing the work. Another programme, initiated in his department was the compilation of Country Statistical Profiles which had helped establish African Information Highway.

Charles has a pleasant disposition, he is calm and thoughtful and always helpful and busy building bridges, never focusing on himself but on programmes of immense overall benefits to the region. He is a very decent personality, always putting across his views without any drama. A team player as well as an effective leader—indeed a transformational leader who got the work done.

My wish is that as he retires, he is not tired plus being in good health and will join the group of African Statistics Elders to continue with his powerful contributions. The African Statistics Community wishes him happiness plus abundant full life.

Oladejo Ajayi Retired DG/SG, Nigeria National Statistics & International Statistical Consultant. 22/10/2020

Dr. Charles Lufumpa has been at the forefront of the efforts and initiatives aimed at the development of the African Statistical System in the last 25 years or so. He provided a lot of insight, leadership and stewardship to processes of establishing and rollout of a new and innovative statistical architecture for Africa. This came on the heels of adoption in 2007 of the Ref-

erence Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa by the African Statistical Community and the Conference of African Ministers for Finance, Planning and Economic Development. The architecture involved, *inter alia*, upgrading the Statistics Division at the African Development Bank (AfDB) to a full-fledged Statistics Department; establishment of the African Centre for Statistics at the UN Economic Commission for Africa and a Statistics Unit at the African Union Commission; and establishment of the African Statistical Coordination Committee that brought together pan-African institutions plus the African Capacity Building Foundation and Regional Economic Communities. With this architecture in place, a number of consequential continental statistical initiatives were embarked upon, a lot of them with funding from AfDB. They included, among others, initiatives on the African component of the International Comparison Programme, African Group on Statistical Training, Africa Information Highway, Africa Infrastructure Knowledge Programme, Gender Statistics programme, Civil Registration & Vital Statistics Programme, Agricultural Statistics programme, African Symposium on Statistical Development, etc. We salute Charles on his lifelong dedicated service to and achievements in the promotion of statistical development and their use in Africa and internationally. We go forth with promise and energized by the great work done by this statistics giant.

Prof. Ben Kiregyera, Former Director, African Centre for Statistics, UN Economic Commission for Africa and now an international statistical consultant.

The term statistical development in Africa is coterminous with Charles Lufumpa and spans two and half decades of a colourfully quiet career. He livened up the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistics which was furloughed for almost two decades at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. When I first met him, it was with regard to participation of Statistics South Africa in the International Comparisons Programme (ICP). He wanted South Africa to participate as a ring country. I had just had my scars from a badly managed consumer Price Index, and taking on a global task on such a sensitive index did not place me in good stead. I refused, but a no to Charles does not work. He approached Jacob Rytén to speak to me, and in a joint meeting all went smoothly. Charles was one you would go for intractable missions with. He never shunned taking responsibility. One of those was the failed AfDB

support for a session in Angola, one if left unattended and repaired could have spawned a political blowup in the newly born Africa Symposium for Statistical Development. The gory details are of entertaining value and deserve discussing separately. Suffice to mention that with a week to Christmas Charles was in Angola with the now Statistician General of South Africa, Risenga Maluleke, to manage and secure the successful progression of the ASSD. His soft voice belies his tenacity and determination. He hardly takes the limelight, leads from behind and the sidelines but steps up with uncompromising integrity when the occasion demands. My hostility to the AfDB when we established ASSD in January 2006, and located a terminology the “Friends of the ECA” was diplomatically melted with a visit to Tunisia where the discussion on roles and responsibility was discussed amongst the UNECA, AfDB and ASSD. Not only was the peace pipe smoked, a fig leaf was extended and shared, but it was done in the context of consumption of a variety of the most juicy, tasteful and size-able figs I have ever come across. Dr Charles Lufumpa structured the most innovative funding model for statistics in Africa. This was an envy in all regions. On the downside, Charles like most statistics offices in Africa and the world, led a boy’s choir, and in this regard a gender lens is urgently needed and this is a matter for his successor.

Pali Lehohla is the former Statistician-General of South Africa and former head of Statistics South Africa and global expert consultant on statistical development

Namibia in particular will miss the contribution that Charles accorded to us in terms of his advice and assistance that we always received from him as the Director of Statistics at the AfDB. His accessibility, generosity, humility and guidance will always be treasured by Namibia and I believe by the African Statistical fraternity at large.

Go well Charles and please keep your door open for continuous support and advice.

Alex Shimufena, Statistician-General Namibia

We have all known Charles for a long time. Both professionally and socially. It is difficult to describe him fully without significant omissions. The task as we can all imagine is huge. Statistical development is a difficult programme and even more complex is development statistics. Dealing with 54 African countries national statistics offices, regional and global partners is not easy. It requires knowledge, skill, diplomacy, patience,

commitment, integrity and the list goes on. Yet Charles made it look simple.

Dr Charles approached his work with passion. Partnered in mobilizing African countries to improve and invest in official statistics. Advised many heads of statistics offices on a personal level. Connected emotionally with everyone he met along the way and yes, he succeeded. Looking back, it looks like he gave everyone, everything that they needed. How that is possible, I will have to look for him to get the answer. He developed and supported many Pan African Statistics initiatives that have benefited many African countries.

His wisdom, dedication, supportiveness, peacefulness, firmness, the list is long is contagious. He is a man of great integrity. I wish I could find one word that covers everything that he is!

Wise, supportive, dedication, commitment, truthful, positive, . . . *Intore* (in Kinyarwanda means a man of integrity, and a noble person. A person who is heroic, a person who, can actually stand up to the challenge, and do things. In Kinyarwanda, intore means someone with great moral integrity). To Charles, we wish you all the best, especially a long healthy life and a happy family and family time.

We will keep in touch and we hope you spare some time to keep in touch with the statistics community.

Murangwa Yusuf, Director General National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda

I have known Dr. Charles Leyeka Lufumpa since 2004 when I was in the trenches of the general data dissemination system (GDDS) programme of IMF trying to help improve and develop sustainable statistical systems of countries in Africa. I learnt at the time that he was already a pillar if not a cornerstone in spearheading statistical development in the continent. Since then I grew to learn more about him and how under his stewardship of the statistics department at the African Development Bank supported countries in an array of statistical areas to building capacity. This was not only limited to member countries of the Bank but also to Regional Economic Groupings and the Regional Statistical Training Centres. During my tenure at IMF we shared an exchange of ideas on a number of issues, and in all of them he demonstrated his impeccable leadership and insightful knowledge of the issues that confront statistical development in Africa. He provided guidance on how the GDDS programme I was responsible for, could complement the work of the Bank and foster impactful capacity building in countries. Interestingly, after my tenure at the IMF in 2009, I ended up working

for him as one of his Managers responsible for the statistical capacity development division in the statistics department at the Bank. It is in this time that I got to know and understand Charles and who he really was as a professional, a friend and my countryman. Charles has a big heart which is indescribable, and I am yet to know another person of similar standing, very tolerant, calm and collected always, even in the heat of a difficult situation. He did not show stress at all – always above aboard. It is therefore not surprising that he not only earned respect from his peers, heads of national statistical agencies both in region and beyond but also has become a world-renowned leader in statistics. The personal and professional relationship has continued even when I moved to the UN Economic Commission for Africa in 2016. We have continued to work together

in a number of complimentary statistical programmes and I must say, he has been instrumental in ensuring that all heads of statistical offices attend the Statistical Commission for Africa. Dr. Lufumpa made sure that the Bank provides financial support. His contribution in statistical development has been nothing short of phenomenal. I salute him, and I look forward to further engaging him in his new endeavor.

On behalf of the ECA and the entire African statistical community, I wish Dr. Charles Lufumpa all the best, and trust he will continue to add value as he transitions to join the many highly esteemed Statistical Elders that my office draws upon for support.

Oliver Chinganya, Director: African Centre for Statistics, UN Economic Commission for Africa