

## Guest Editorial

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It is my great pleasure to invite you to explore this special section of the Statistical Journal of the International Association for Official Statistics. The section celebrates the 2020 Asia Pacific Statistics Week where nearly 900 experts, development partners, academicians, official statisticians and various public and private stakeholders from 63 countries and territories around the world<sup>1</sup> gathered virtually under the theme “*decade of action for the 2030 Agenda: Statistics that leave no one and nowhere behind.*”

In its fifth year, the Asia-Pacific Statistics Week is a feature of the Asia-Pacific statistical calendar. The Week was established by the Asia-Pacific Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics among member states of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). With the financial support of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (previously Department for International Development) the week brings together statisticians to share their experiences, build skills in a conference environment as presenters, moderators, session chairs and organisers, and for peer-to-peer learning.

In 2020 the Week was expanded to all fields of statistics, not just economic statistics, and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, was delivered in an entirely virtual setting only three months into COVID-19 lockdowns.

Over 400 abstracts were submitted and after an extensive period of review, 85 papers by 163 authors representing 18 countries and 8 international organizations were selected for presentation during the Week. It was an excellent week of connecting, conversations and collaboration.

Mr. Pullinger, President of the IAOS for the period

2019–2021, was a keynote speaker presenting on the theme of new norms for official statistics. Reflecting on how the Pacific is the first to greet each new day, he spoke of the importance of the official statistics community stepping up and stepping forward in response to COVID-19 and its impact on official statistics. “We should not miss this opportunity to build better statistics for a better future and for better decisions,” said Mr. Pullinger.

Mr. Pullinger joined Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the UNESCAP. “Data and statistics are key” Ms. Alisjahbana said, “for the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind and now for responding to the challenges of COVID-19.”

Professor Lisa Grace Bersales and Mr. Oliver Chinganya set a very high standard in their keynote addresses. Professor Bersales from the University of the Philippines and former National Statistician of the Philippine Statistics Authority inspired participants with her talk, *The Future is Here*, sharing insights about new technologies, new data, and new roles for statistics and statisticians. Mr. Chinganya, Director of the African Centre for Statistics in the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) shared insights of the contributions and challenges of the African region, highlighting that, like Asia-Pacific, engaging everyone, everywhere to build data driven organizations and countries is key.

In this context, it is a great pleasure to introduce a selection of papers from the 2020 Asia-Pacific Statistics Week. The papers showcase the talent in Asia and the Pacific, and the breadth of work and the variety of statistical issues being considered. The articles chosen in this special section come from China and Hong Kong, China in East and North-East Asia; Bhutan, the Maldives and the Islamic Republic of Iran in South and South-West Asia; to Malaysia and Indonesia in South-East Asia. The papers address four key themes and im-

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.unescap.org/resources/report-results-2020-asia-pacific-and-statistics-week>.

portant topics of the week: users, quality, integration and modernisation.

#### *Engaging users and investing in statistics*

Outreach, user engagement and investment in statistics are critical to the strengthening of National Statistical Systems (NSSs). The increased engagement of users of statistics creates enhanced demand for statistics which in turn can increase investment in statistics.

Fourteen papers were presented during the 2020 Asia-Pacific Statistics Week under this theme. One of the papers appears in this special section of the journal. From Indonesia, Erika Siregar and co-authors contribute a paper on the use of R Shiny Apps to improve data literacy. The authors showcase the use of readily available tools in open-source software for visualising and exploring data published on BPS-Indonesia's website. This paper directly addresses a key point raised by Mr. Pullinger about the importance of 'stepping forward' and engaging with users.

#### *Assuring quality and instilling trust in statistics*

For official statistics to be used and sufficient resources to be secured, the quality of official statistics has to be trusted by the public. Legal frameworks that accord coordination authority and responsibility to National Statistical Offices (NSOs) are a transformative tool. National strategies for the development of official statistics are also transformative. Both are prerequisites for improved coordination, system-wide quality assurance frameworks, efficient data flows, and modernised statistical business processes.

Sixteen papers were presented during the Week under this theme and three have been selected for this special section. The papers showcase the lengths to which the Asia and Pacific statistical community go to ensure public trust in official statistics. From Tashi Namgyal from Bhutan, we hear of Bhutan's efforts to undertake an inaugural, cross-sectoral Waste Inventory Survey. Winida Albertha and co-authors, from Indonesia, explore the efforts which went into assuring the quality of administrative data for use in their Population Census. And Sofoora Usman and co-authors, from the Maldives, show us the improvements which took place to their Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems.

#### *Integrated statistics for integrated analysis*

To provide timely products and services that respond

to the needs of users, NSSs need to accelerate efforts to improve their capacity to integrate data sources and establish integrated production and reporting systems. These efforts are central to meeting the need for integrated analysis of the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development. This calls for innovative thinking, in particular on the use of data sources that are new to official statistics.

Not less than thirty papers were presented during the Week under this theme, by far the largest for all themes. In this special section we hear from four authors on the topics of 'big data', area sampling, price indices and gig economy estimates. Isnaeni Noviyanti and Panca Prabawa and co-authors, of Indonesia, explore the development of business process designs for big data using the example of mobile phone data for delineating urban areas. Also from Indonesia we hear from Rizky Zulkarnain and co-authors about the estimation of SDG indicators for non-sampled areas using cluster information. Abdorahim Ira and co-authors, from the Islamic Republic of Iran, write about Iran's nutritious foods Price Index and Food Survey of Urban/Rural households, and Malaysia's Nurfarahin Harun and co-authors write about an experimental measure of Gig Workers using the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

#### *Modernising statistical business processes*

The modernisation of statistical business processes encompasses data and information management as well as underlying statistical and technological infrastructure. This is foundational for the facilitation of quality management, the integration of data sources, and for managing data confidentiality issues, including with regard to microdata. This places statistical business processes at the core of transforming NSSs for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

And as we heard from Professor Bersales, modernisation is already here: official statistics are already embracing new data sources, new techniques and approaches, and statisticians all over the world need to embrace the now. Collaborate, together, as a professional and statistical community.

Fifteen papers were presented during the Week under this theme, and in this special section we hear from four authors. Chunzhen Zhang from NBS China discusses 'data middle platforms' for 'big data', while Olivia Or, from Hong Kong China, writes about the use of online questionnaires in a general household survey. Octavia Rizky Prasetyo and co-authors, from Indonesia, explore

the development of an area sampling frame for maize statistics; Lee Cee You and co-authors, from Malaysia, write about an e-survey data collection mechanism for short-term economic surveys; and, Saeed Fayyaz and Reza Hadizadeh from the Islamic Republic of Iran explore innovative methods to improve the quality of official statistics using big data and administrative sources.

*Developing the contribution of statisticians in the Asia-Pacific to the global statistical system*

With the support of mentors from the global statistical community, the papers are testament to the innovation and talent in Asia and the Pacific. My sincere thanks go to all mentors: Dennis Trewin, James Cochran, Lisa Bersales, Eunkoo Lee, Teerapong Praphotjanaporn, Catherine Smyth, Leigh Merrington, Alope Kar, Ronald Jansen, and Raj Mitra. They freely shared time, experience, and expertise to work with the authors to submit papers which meet the re-

quirements of academic journals. This innovation in capacity-building produced some important lessons about how the global statistical community can support both the sharing of inspiring knowledge from all parts of the globe and help develop the written communication skills of statisticians.

*Concluding remarks*

I would like to pay a special tribute to all of those who contributed to the successful 2020 Asia-Pacific Statistics Week. Authors, presenters, organisers, chairs, mentors, the IAOS and ISI families, the UK government, and the Statistical Divisions of UN ESCAP and UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Of course, there were many more papers and presentations than could have been developed and included in this edition of the Statistical Journal of the IAOS. All the conference papers are available on the conference website.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.unescap.org/resources/report-results-2020-asia-pacific-and-statistics-week#PS>.