



# Project Information Document (PID)

Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 27-Sep-2022 | Report No: PIDC34130

**BASIC INFORMATION****A. Basic Project Data**

Country Western and Central Africa	Project ID P178497	Parent Project ID (if any)	Project Name Harmonizing and Improving Statistics in West and Central Africa (HISWACA) - SOP 1 (P178497)
Region WESTERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA	Estimated Appraisal Date Jan 16, 2023	Estimated Board Date Apr 27, 2023	Practice Area (Lead) Poverty and Equity
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing	Borrower(s) Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Republic of Benin, Republic of Niger, The African Union (AU), The Republic of Guinea, The Republic of Guinea-Bissau, The Republic of Mali, The Republic of Senegal, West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)	Implementing Agency Agence Nationale de la Statistique de l'Analyse et de la Démographie (ANSADE), Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie (ANSD), Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS), Institut National de la Statistique (INSTAT), Institut National de la Statistique et de la Démographie (INStad), Institut National de la Statistique, Guinea, Institut National de la Statistique, Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE)	

**Proposed Development Objective(s)**

The development objective of this series of projects is to improve the statistical performance, harmonization, and data access of participating countries and regional bodies in Western and Central Africa and to support the modernization of their statistical systems.

**PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US\$, Millions)****SUMMARY**



Total Project Cost	415.00
Total Financing	415.00
of which IBRD/IDA	415.00
Financing Gap	0.00

## DETAILS

### World Bank Group Financing

International Development Association (IDA)	415.00
IDA Credit	315.00
IDA Grant	100.00

Environmental and Social Risk Classification  
Moderate

### Concept Review Decision

Track II-The review did authorize the preparation to continue

Other Decision (as needed)

## B. Introduction and Context

### Regional and Country Context

- After a recession in 2020 due to the Coronavirus Disease (COVID)-19 pandemic followed by a partial recovery in 2021, growth in the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) economy is expected to be slow in 2022 as the region faces new economic threats.** For the first time over the last 27 years, SSA recorded a negative real economic growth rate of 2.0 percent in 2020. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global supply chains, commodity prices, transport, and the implementation of stringent control measures by governments across the world led to a global economic slowdown and caused the economy of SSA to contract in 2020. With the vaccine rollout and lifting of restrictive measures in most countries, economic growth in SSA recovered to an estimated 4 percent in 2021, albeit with significant variation across countries. However, growth is projected to decline to 3.6 percent in 2022 due to several short-term headwinds – the slowdown in the global economy, continuing effects of the pandemic including supply disruptions, high rates of inflation, rising financial risks owing to high public debts,



and the war in Ukraine. For the West and Central Africa (AFW) subregion, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth is estimated at around 4 percent in 2021 and projected to be 4.2 percent in 2022, with relatively strong growth expected for West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) countries and non-resource rich countries. There are significant downside risks to the economic outlook for SSA due to both external risks – related to the pandemic, the Ukraine war, and policies in advanced economies – and domestic factors, including risks related to debt, security and severe weather conditions.

2. **COVID-19 has had a dramatic impact on poverty in 2020 and the projected trend of poverty incidence in AFW.** The poverty rate in AFW is likely to have increased by nearly 2 percentage points in 2020 from its 2019 level after a decade of steady decline, which implies an additional 13 million people in poverty. Extreme poverty rate is projected to be back at its pre-COVID-19 levels only by 2024; but even this outlook may be optimistic given the recent rise in food prices, which disproportionately affects the purchasing power of lower-income households who tend to spend a larger share of their budget on food. The poverty rate in the sub-region for 2030 is projected to be about 2.5 percent higher than what was projected before COVID-19. In 2030, with just 7 percent of the global population, AFW is expected to be home to nearly 30 percent of the global extreme poor. Recovery in the region is still hampered by the low vaccination rates, the limited resources to continue providing financial assistance to vulnerable households and firms and the escalating conflict in Ukraine which threatens food security. There is wide variation in the incidence of poverty across countries in the sub-region (Figure 1). More than half of the extreme poor population of AFW live in Nigeria, while one-fifth are in the Sahel countries.
3. **In addition, security issues that predate the pandemic continue to affect most AFW countries.** Over the last decades, SSA region has experienced political and security challenges leading to fragility and violence in several countries. Of the 22 countries in AFW, 11 countries, which are home to 73 percent of the population of the sub-region, are experiencing some sort of Fragility, Conflict, and Violence (FCV). Of these, six countries have more than 20 percent of their poor population living in conflict areas. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in 2019, there was a sharp rise in forced displacement in AFW. The number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) reached over 5 million by the end of the year, which represented an increase of over 30 percent in 12 months. This upward trend was mainly due to the rapidly deteriorating situation in Burkina Faso, Mali, and western Niger<sup>1</sup>. Likewise, as of June 2021, there were 9.7 million persons of concern to UNHCR in 21 countries in AFW, a 9 percent increase from the previous year (refugees and IDPs reaching 1.4 million and 6.9 million respectively)<sup>2</sup>.
4. **The AFW faces several other challenges to boosting poverty reduction and shared prosperity.** Despite the decline in the poverty rate over the last decade, the share of the global poor living in AFW rose from 4.4 percent in 2000 to 29.8 percent in 2019. The number of individuals living in extreme poverty in AFW estimated at 154.9 million in 2019 is now projected to increase by 29 million in 2030 in part due to rapid (projected) population growth that would have led to an increase in the poor population in 2030 even without COVID-19. The region has also struggled to improve shared prosperity. To reverse the trend of increasing number of poor, the region must record higher growth that is also more inclusive so that poverty reduction becomes more responsive to

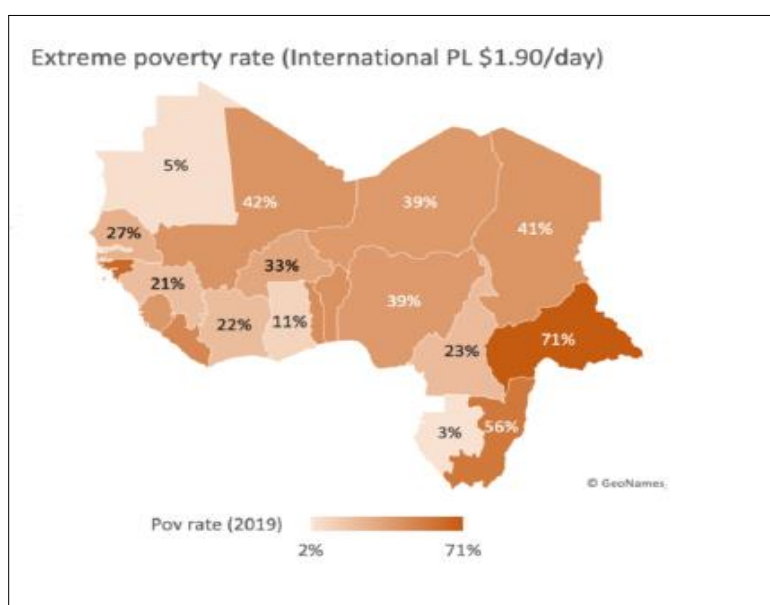
<sup>1</sup> UNHCR Standing Committee, Update- West and Central Africa, February 24, 2020

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR Standing Committee, Update- West and Central Africa, September 23, 2021



growth. Economic growth in many countries has been mainly driven by high commodity prices for oil, minerals, and agricultural products. Economic diversification remains a necessary condition for inclusive growth and poverty reduction. But the region faces many challenges in diversifying its economies, including low levels of infrastructure, governance, and low productivity in the agriculture sector which employs most of the population, particularly in rural areas. Important challenges are also posed by the low level of human capital development, which leads to high inequality of opportunity that in turn constrains long-term economic growth and social mobility. Promoting equal opportunities will require improving basic services, including access to electricity, adequate sanitation, and quality education and health services (notably maternal care and early childhood development).

Figure 1: Poverty Rates in West and Central Africa



5. **Gaps and unevenness in the quality of data limits the ability to inform and foster economic development and create the conditions for inclusive growth and evidence-based policymaking in the region.** Accurate, timely, and reliable statistics are instrumental in designing and implementing good policies and effectively monitoring them. They are also necessary for tracking progress and assessing the impact of different policies. Statistics are also essential to effectively manage the delivery of basic services. Good statistics improve the transparency and accountability of policymaking, which are essential for good governance.

## B. Sectoral and Institutional Context

6. **For decades, many African countries have experienced a vicious cycle of under-funding, under-provision, low capacity, and under-utilization of data for monitoring and policy purposes, to provide better living conditions for African peoples.** In this regard, building capacity for the production and use of statistics has been one of the recurrent development themes in Africa over the years. Since the 2000s, many development initiatives were undertaken to improve the African statistical landscape, at the continental, regional and country levels, taking



advantage of the many opportunities that have been presented by the changing policy environment, including the focus by national governments and the international community on management for development results. These initiatives include the following:

- Development of National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) in many countries since 2005.
- Improved legislation on statistics with more countries making the National Statistics Office (NSO) more autonomous.
- Development of the Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa (RRSF) which was adopted by the Conference of African Ministers responsible for development in 2007.
- Development in 2009 of the African Charter on Statistics.
- Development in 2011 of the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA), later renewed in 2017 as the second SHaSA (SHaSA2)

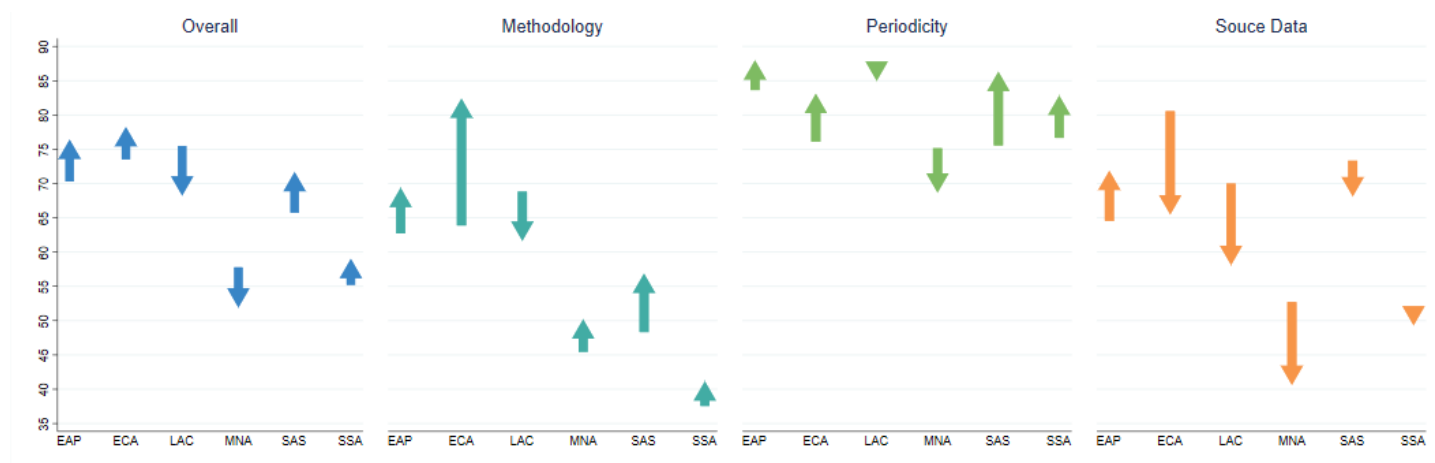
7. **Even though COVID-19 has pushed backward some progress in many statistical areas such as population census, economic and household surveys, substantial progress has been made in producing statistics in the continent** Several countries are conducting population censuses in line with international recommendations and are making more frequent revisions to their national accounts. The geographic coverage, timeliness, and base year of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) have also improved. External trade statistics are harmonized in many countries, and most of the countries use the same software, EUROTRACE. Thanks to the World Bank's support, the number of countries conducting regular surveys that collect data to estimate poverty has increased. The quality (including timeliness) of social indicators has also improved with the support of donor-funded programs such as the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS).
8. **The increase in the World Bank Statistical Capacity Indicator (SCI)<sup>3</sup> illustrates this progress in statistical capacity building in Africa over the past sixteen years, though the progress made is still modest.** The SCI provides a grade for every country in the world on the methodology, data sources, periodicity, and timeliness of core economic and social statistics. The SCI for SSA countries (excluding high income<sup>4</sup>) increased from 55.2 in 2004 to 57.0 in 2020 (an increase of 1.8 score points), with progress in two of the three dimensions of the SCI: methodology and periodicity. SSA's score for periodicity is close to those of the rest of the world, but it does poorly in source data (worse than all except the Middle East/North Africa and not improving between 2004 and 2020).

<sup>3</sup> The World Bank's SCI is a composite score assessing a country's statistical system based on a diagnostic framework assessing methodology, data sources, periodicity, and timeliness. Countries are scored on 25 criteria in these areas using publicly available information and country input. The overall SCI score is calculated as the average of all three area scores on a scale of 0 to 100.

<sup>4</sup> Mauritius and Seychelles



Figure 1: Evolution of Statistical Capacity Index (2004 to 2020) by Region



9. However, despite these gains in the frequency and quality of censuses and household surveys, African Statistical Systems are far from meeting the user needs. The SCI for Africa is still the lowest among developing regions and is masked by wide disparities across countries, particularly in AFW. The weaknesses of the Statistical Systems in SSA are also reflected in the overall score of the continent for the Statistical Performance Indicators (SPI) (figure 3) produced by the World Bank since 2019, as a replacement to the SCI. For 2020, the World Bank SPI score for SSA was 52.4, compared to a global average of 62.3. This indicator provides a measure of the degree to which NSS contribute to better decisions and strong accountability by meeting user needs for statistics. It assesses countries on five pillars of statistical performance: (i) data use – extent to which data produced by the NSS are used widely and frequently by different stakeholders; (ii) data services – extent to which services connect data users to producers through data releases, online access and data access services such as secure microdata access; (iii) data products – availability and quality of key NSS data products to produce indicators needed to measure progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), (iv) data sources – the extent to which a country collects key data sources (e.g. population census, agricultural census, business establishment census, household survey to measure poverty, labor force survey, health survey, vital registration system coverage, and geospatial data); (v) data infrastructure – availability and quality of institutional infrastructure (legislation, governance, standards) and the financial resources needed to deliver useful and widely used data products and services. Countries are scored against 51 indicators in these pillars, using publicly available information. The overall Statistical Performance score is then calculated as a simple average of all five pillar scores on a scale of 0-100.

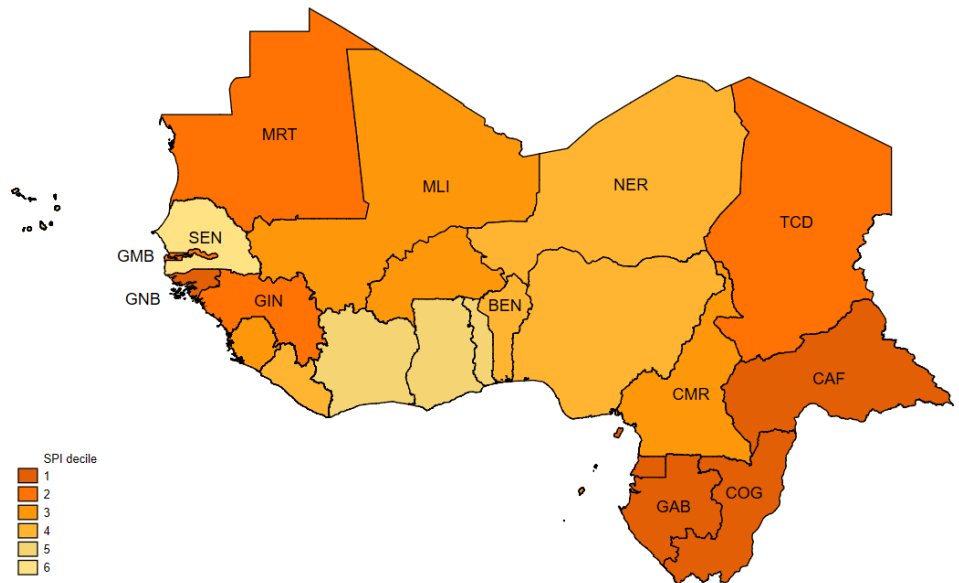


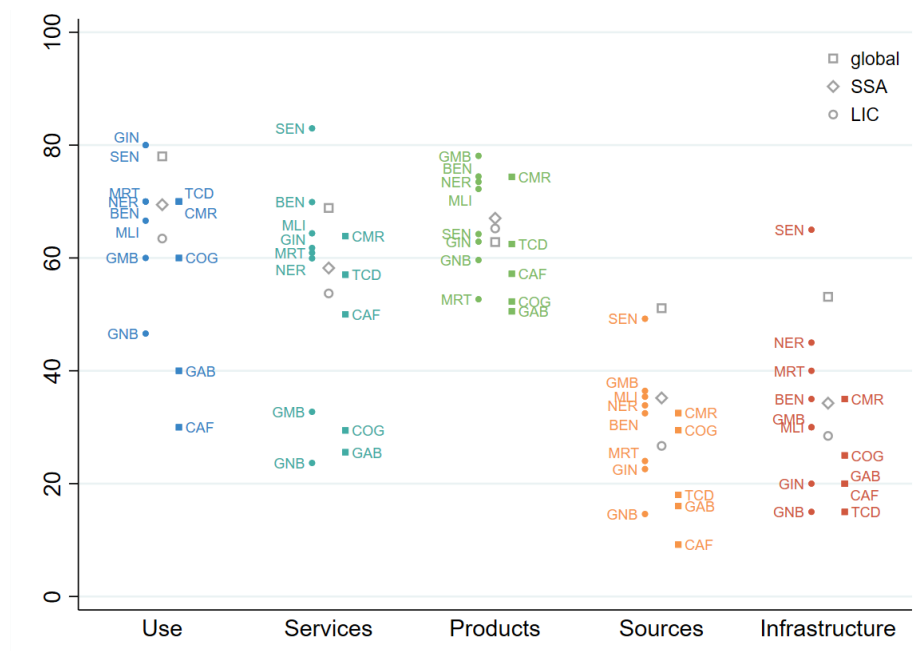
Figure 2: SPI Scores Deciles for West and Central Africa (2020)

10. **Countries in AFW generally fall below the median in statistical performance, as seen in the map above.** Indeed, four of the proposed countries in central Africa fall in the bottom decile. The performance of the proposed countries varies across the pillars of the SPI. Most countries perform reasonably well on data products (availability of data to monitor indicators related to the SDGs), falling close to the median scores, except on gender equality and climate statistics. There is a wide variation in the performance of countries in measures of data use (availability of key data in UN or other international databases) and data services (indicators related to openness and accessibility of data). The proposed countries in AFW perform consistently poorly in terms of data sources and data infrastructure.





Figure 3: SPI Scores by Pillar (2020)

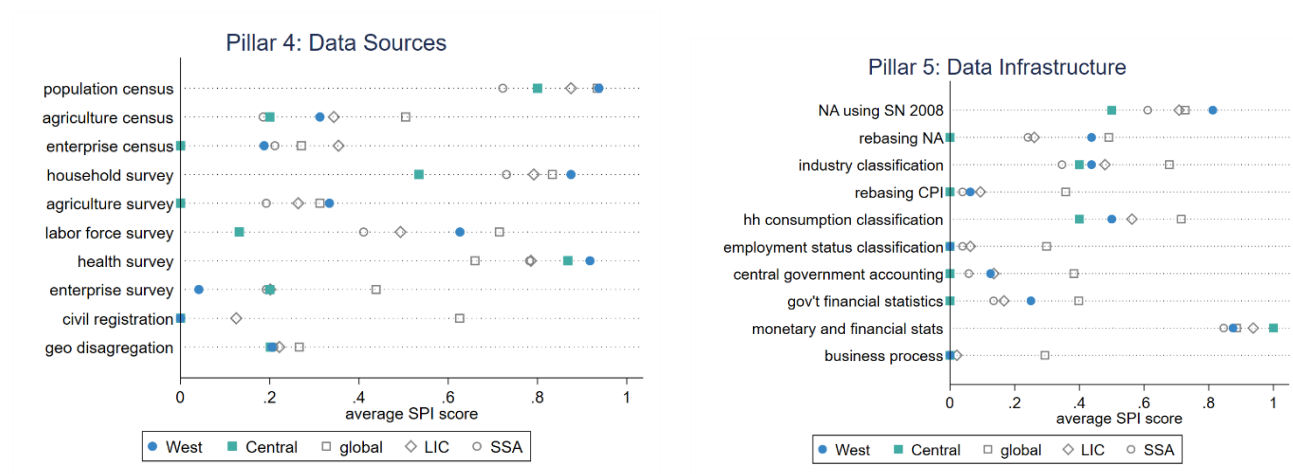


11. Significant variation is also observed in other pillars of the SPI such as data sources and data infrastructure.

For data sources (implementation of censuses and surveys), countries do particularly poorly on enterprise census and surveys, civil registration, agriculture census and surveys and data disaggregation at first and second administrative units. In addition, Central African countries do poorly in labor force surveys. For data infrastructure (mainly use of international standards for data classification and compilation), the countries do poorly in rebasing national accounts and CPI, in employment classification as well as in compilation of central government accounting status to noncash recording basis and establishment of government finance statistics based on the 2014 manual.



Figure 4: Deep Dive in SPI Pillars 4 and 5



The proposed series of projects aims to address these relevant data sources' gaps and weaknesses of the statistical infrastructure common to the national statistical systems in the AFW, to increase their statistical performance through a regional approach.

12. **A regional approach will facilitate coordination among NSOs by introducing and expanding innovations, peer-to-peer reviewing, and learning that can generate positive externalities.** The NSOs rarely have comparable in-country counterparts and often look to their peers in other countries to innovate. A regional operational program can facilitate this cross-fertilization. New technologies for data collection or storage, measurement, and analysis can be developed and tested in one country and transferred to others in similar situations, generating low-cost benefits. Adopting similar standards and classification also creates economies of scale and makes it easier to transfer knowledge (and build capacity) because peers will be familiar with the methods and standards. It can also spread beyond the program's beneficiaries if they are proven to work. Training can be conducted more efficiently by utilizing regional schools, reducing training costs due to economies of scale. Such harmonized statistics also allow for creating a shared pool of skills in the region as the statisticians in the statistical agencies get trained on common standards, methods, and tools.
13. **Although the proposed countries score quite poorly on the SPI in general the potential for improved performance exists through peer-to-peer learning facilitated by a regional project.** For instance, if a country adopted the best practice shown by its peers in West and Central Africa for each indicator of the SPI, it could achieve a score of 76.6, placing it in the top 40% of countries globally and very close to the average of high-income countries (78.5). This sustains the rationale of adopting the regional approach in the implementation of these series of projects. This shows that despite the challenges they face, significantly better SPI scores are not out of reach for these countries, even leveraging just the knowledge and experience that exists in the region.
14. **Prevention, mitigation, and recovery from regional and global crises like COVID-19 also require a concerted regional approach to set up emergency observatories to establish rapid data collection capacity and geospatial and big data capabilities.** Natural disasters like floods, droughts, and pandemics do not stop at



national borders. Effective monitoring and response to a crisis requires a regional capacity to rapidly collect high-frequency data harmonized across borders. In the context of COVID-19, the World Bank swiftly rolled out rapid response phone surveys across dozens of countries often in close collaboration with NSOs. While the ad-hoc approach delivered invaluable data, established emergency observatories can produce data in even shorter timelines using new methodologies not only including rapid response phone surveys but also using geospatial and big data. Embedded in a regional approach, the data can be harmonized ex-ante by producing regional data at the country level to inform national and regional policies. This will also strengthen the capacities and modernization of the NSOs in the production and use of such data.

- 15. A modular approach will accommodate differences between countries.** Some countries are more advanced than others in terms of statistical capacity and data availability. For example, some NSOs are well-staffed, whereas others lack qualified staff and cannot conduct multiple surveys in the same year. However, the overall objective toward better performing national and regional statistics systems is common to the region and the specific countries, and the design of the Program will reflect cross-country differences to allow effective implementation of the Program.

### **C. Relationship to CPF**

- 16. The projects support in statistical capacity building in developing countries is in line with the twin goals of the World Bank.** Despite some progress, performance of the statistical systems in participating countries remains insufficient to effectively support evidenced-based development planning. The limited availability of quality statistics in Africa remains one of the main obstacles to better monitoring poverty reduction strategies, economic progress and managing for development results. Furthermore, the production of harmonized statistics and their alignment to international standards and classifications are prerequisites to producing quality data needed for informing evidence-based policy making, a fundamental objective of the World Bank in supporting statistical capacity building in developing countries.
- 17. The project will also inform two main strategies recently launched in the Africa region.** First, the project will support the World Bank Groups updated Regional Integration and Cooperation Assistance Strategy (RICAS 2021-2023) through data production and analytics. This strategy aims to help strengthen regional integration in Africa and to reinforce its support to the continent recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and to realize its economic transformation. Most particularly, in the West and Central Region, the project will support the recently launched 2021-2025 regional strategy “Support a resilient recovery” that aims at addressing the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing climate change, through restoring trust between citizens and the state to create a new social contract, removing the bottlenecks that prevent businesses from creating more and better jobs, strengthening human capital and empowering women, and building climate resilience.
- 18. This program is also aligned with the African Union (AU)’s SHaSA2 and national strategies for the Development of Statistics, as well as regional and global commitments for better monitoring of goals.** The SHaSA2 (2017-2026) aims at addressing constraints in statistical production, harmonization, and availability to promote the regional integration agenda. It is consistent with the UNs Fundamental Principles of Official



Statistics and the African Charter on Statistics. It covers the production of better-quality and harmonized statistics, improved cooperation, and coordination between African statistical institutions, building sustainable institutional capacity and enhancing use of statistics by promoting a culture of quality decision making. The program also responds to the united call for internationally comparable statistics which is especially relevant in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 for a prosperous and united Africa. Therefore, this is an appropriate time to promote synergies and cooperation within the statistical community and encourage countries to make efforts toward harmonization of statistics and to align them to the monitoring needs for SDGs.

**19. The Program will operationalize the World Bank Group Gender Strategy based on a data-driven approach.**

The World Bank Group Gender Strategy document for 2016 to 2023 calls for better country-level diagnostics on gender gaps in systematic country diagnostics and country partnership frameworks to “highlight how closing the key gender gaps in endowments, economic opportunities, and voice and agency would boost the attainment of the twin goals.” Improving the quality of national and regional data is essential to pursue this goal. The Program will contribute to this agenda by producing and making available such data based on international standards and enhancing its use.

**20. The program will also contribute to attaining the objective set by the Bank’s [Data for Policy \(D4P\) initiative](#).**

The D4P is a World Bank engagement to strengthen national statistical systems, build capacity in IDA countries, by enhancing the availability, timeliness, quality, and relevance of key data for evidence-based decision making. More specifically, the International Development Association (IDA)20 cycle commits to support 34 IDA countries including those with ongoing statistical operations (i) to strengthen institutions and build capacity to reduce gaps in the availability of core data for evidence-based policy making, including disaggregation by gender and disability status where appropriate; and (ii) to increase resilience of statistical systems, including through investments in digital technology and high-frequency monitoring capabilities. This program would contribute to delivering one third of this IDA20 target in FY23.

**21. The Program reflects priorities emphasized in the World Bank’s World Development Report on Data for Better Lives as well as the respective World Bank country strategies.**

The design of the Program is squarely based on the frameworks and recommendations of the World Development Report on Data for Better Lives. At country level, the project reflects priorities emphasized in World Bank country strategies. Country Partnership Frameworks (CPF)<sup>5</sup> and Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCDs) have identified weaknesses in statistics as a barrier to effective monitoring of strategies of development and SDGs in all participating countries. The project will address quality data production and dissemination on a regular basis, in each participating country, and will also focus on specific issues highlighted in CPFs, Performance Learning Reviews (PLR) and SCDs.

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<sup>5</sup> Benin: Report No. 123031-BJ; Central Africa Republic: Report No. 150618-CF; The Chad: Report No. 95277-TD; Mali: Report No. 94005-ML; Guinea: Report No. 125899-GN; the Gambia: Report No. 154485-GM; Senegal: Report No. 143333-SN; Niger: Report No. 123736-NE; Mauritania: Report No. 125012-MR; Cameroon: Report No. 107896-CM.



### **Box 1: Statistics and data production for evidence-based policy in CPFs**

#### **Benin**

The project will provide capacity building to official statistics as was committed to in the Benin CPF. The activities to be financed by the project are consistent with the Government of Benin's (GoB) priority policy areas in the NSDS, the National Development Plan (NDP) and other compatible agendas. The GoB is committed to, and currently putting into place the requisite institutional framework to strengthen statistical capacity. The New Statistics Act and the planned National Fund for the Development of Statistics will reinforce the GoB and its partners and donor commitments.

Benin's CPF pillars derived from the country's Growth Strategy for Poverty Reduction (GSPR). The third NSDS (NSDS-3) is also linked to the GSPR and is its main source of production of indicators. The project will reinforce and improve the role of the NSO as the leader of the NSS through the Secretary of the National Statistical Council (*Conseil National de la Statistique, CNS*) by building its capacity in socioeconomic sectors. The project will strengthen the NSO's ability to monitor socioeconomic indicators, to archive national and sub-national datasets, etc. It will also support the improvement of human resources through training, data dissemination, socioeconomic modeling improvement, and a statistical culture development. The development of national statistical capacity and data quality in Benin is in line with the focus on measurable results toward the World Bank objectives of ending extreme poverty by 2030 and promoting shared prosperity.

#### **The Gambia**

Focus areas 1 of The Gambia CPF aims to strengthen transparency, accountability, and effectiveness in governance. The CPF notes significant gaps in the production and analysis of statistics across the NSS which constrains evidence-based policymaking. This view also aligns with the NDP which identifies Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) as a critical pillar for accountability. Through the CPF, the Bank intends to work closely with the government and partners to monitor and report progress on the Turn Around Allocation (TAA) milestones and progress in CPF programs. This includes training staff of Project Implementation Units (PIUs) and continued Technical Assistance (TA) to build the Gambia Bureau of Statistics capacity (GBoS). The proposed activities of the project (notably the strengthening of administrative statistics; and building capacity of GBoS) will complement these plans by improving capacity in the data production, analysis, and use; as well as strengthening capacity across the NSS for evidenced based policymaking.

#### **Guinea Bissau**

Guinea Bissau continues to face significant challenges in its statistical system. Major statistical activities such as surveys and censuses are largely donor-funded. A new CPF is to be prepared in 2023 and will be anchored on the findings of an SCD Update which is currently ongoing. Nonetheless, the previous CPF notes weak institutional and technical coordination in the NSS. It also noted significant constraints affecting the functioning of the NSO – notably, weak technical coordination between producers, users, and donors; and limited financial and material resources to support the execution of key statistical activities. Despite some progress in data production, significant gaps exist in capacity, mainly through support from The World Bank through the WAEMU project (P153702) on harmonized household surveys, (*Enquête Harmonisée sur les*



*Conditions de vie des Ménages*, EHCVM) 2018/19 and EHCVM 2022/23. The proposed activities under this project to strengthen statistical capacity will therefore improve the effective functioning of the NSS, facilitate the generation of quality data for evidence-based policymaking; and support the monitoring of the indicators and programs of the subsequent CPF. Additionally, the proposed financing of the population and housing census through the project is expected to provide a better understanding of the distribution of the population and hence inform basic service delivery. This census (which will be the 4th fourth ever held in the country) has long been planned but was constrained by limited financial resources. As the country team prepares a new CPF, these activities will contribute immensely to the M&E of the CPF programs.

#### **Mauritania**

The project will support the five-year priority action plan (PAP, 2021-2025) of the recent ten-year NSDS for the years 2021 – 2030. This strategy aims to “build by 2030 an efficient and credible statistical system, endowed with adequate resources, with an appropriate legal and organizational framework, whose productions meet the needs of national development policies and those of users.” This new NSS vision is articulated with the Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity, which constitutes the reference framework for the Government's economic and social development programs. It is also anchored in the principles defined by the SHaSA2. The project will participate in preparing and implementing the upcoming round of SCD and CPF.

#### **D. Proposed Development Objective(s)**

22. **The development objective of this series of projects is to improve the statistical performance, harmonization, and data access of participating countries and regional bodies in western and central Africa and to support the modernization of their statistical systems.**

#### **E. Key Results**

23. **The key aspects of the Project Development Objective (PDO) are the improvements of (i) the statistical performance of the NSSs; (ii) harmonization of statistics and (iii) data access.** The project also aims to support the modernization process of the regional statistical systems. The focus area of the statistical performance component of the NSSs relates to their ability to generate data based on international standards, in a timely manner, and their wide availability and use. The harmonization component of the PDO aims to enhance statistical cooperation in the region to produce comparable and quality statistics which means that the NSOs (a) are provided with common regional guidelines and (b) have trained staff with adequate skills to implement them. Another requirement to produce these harmonized statistics is the availability of financial resources at country levels to undertake statistics operations needed to implement the provided regional guidelines. The data access component focuses on making widely available statistical products and reports and micro-data to users.



24. **This means the project aims to improve the AFWs performance of the statistical systems of participating countries and regional bodies to produce statistics needed for decision-making and support the modernization process of the statistical systems**
25. **Thus, progress toward achievement of the PDO will be measured and monitored through the following PDO-level indicators:**
- (a) Improved Statistical Performance Index (SPI) of project participating NSOs: Average score for the customized / (modified on the variables the project will influence by country).
  - (b) Share of harmonized core economic and social statistical products including national accounts, price, household survey statistics produced and published following international standards (percentage, custom).
  - (c) Number of countries that are using improved data collection methods and computerized data checking to improve data quality. (number).
  - (d) Number of comparable core economic and social statistics indicators produced and available for open access following predetermined release calendar (number).
  - (e) Number of United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) Minimum List of gender indicators available using data collected within the past 5 years (Number).

#### **F. Concept Description**

26. **The proposed series of projects aims to improve the performance of national and regional statistical systems in Western and Central Africa.** It is proposed, to implement this program into two series, with countries grouped in alignment with sub-regional organizations: ECOWAS: Benin, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal; and CEMAC: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Gabon, and Republic of Congo.
27. **The current project is the first sequence (SOP1) of the series with Benin, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal as participating countries.** This SOP1 will also support the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Statistics Department, the AU's Statistical Institute (STATAFRIC), and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU); in their coordination and advocacy roles to improve comparability and harmonization of statistics. It is complementing the ongoing Harmonizing and Improving Statistics in West Africa Project (HISWA) (P169265), which is providing support to Cabo Verde, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Togo, ECOWAS and STATAFRIC, to strengthen their statistical systems and harmonize, produce, disseminate, and enhance the use of core economic and social statistics.
28. **In line with the project's main objective, activities of this SOP1 were selected as they are essential inputs for improving the statistical performance index of the country's NSS, as well as for implementing regional**





**policies.** In particular, the program includes all the specific indicators highlighted above in the sectoral context where participating countries share common performance weaknesses as well as country specific weaknesses. However, the selection criteria for activities are not only based on whether the country is not well performing on the dimension, but also on the potential impact of the said activity on other SPI indicators. That is for instance the cases for the population census, poverty survey, labor force survey (LFS) and DHS/MICS, the availability of which, not only account for the pillars 4 (data sources) and 5 (data infrastructure), but also has significant impact on the pillar 3 (data products related to availability of SDGs' indicators).

29. **The selected activities are also fully in line with SHaSA2 in all its strategic objectives**, especially its first one aiming to produce quality statistics for Africa through expansion of the statistical information base, transformation of existing statistics for comparability and harmonization of standards and methods of statistical production.
30. **The project's activities are grouped into four components and planned to be implemented in five years (2023–2027).** The first component is to produce harmonized tools (classifications, methodologies, etc.) at the continental and sub-regional levels and support the production of core statistics using the previous harmonized tools. Activities under this component aim to improve pillars 4 (data sources) and 5 (data infrastructure) of the SPI where participating countries in regions are doing poorly in terms of statistical performance. Indeed, while harmonization will help adoption of international standards, the production of core set of economic, social and demographic statistics is needed to meet users' demand on statistics. Activities implemented through this component will also be instrumental to ensuring performance of the NSSs regarding availability of indicators needed to monitor most of the SDGs (pillar 3 of the SPI).
31. **The second component supports institutional reforms, improves data access, dissemination, and use; and human resources development.** All the participating countries have a Statistics Act that underpins the collection, management, and dissemination of official statistics. These Statistics Acts are largely in line with the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and African Charter on Statistics. In almost all these countries, the Statistics Acts provide for the NSO to be an autonomous agency of the Government with its own governing board, which raises the profile of statistics, enhances the integrity and credibility of official statistics in the eyes of the public. However, most of the Statistics Acts lack provisions for sustainable funding of statistical activities. In this regard, the key principles of institutional reforms are to finance technical assistance to participating countries to update their Statistics Act. The component also supports data access and dissemination, harmonized time series at the continental and sub-regional levels and time series and micro-data at the national level. Doing so will therefore improve their performance regarding data services (pillar 2 of the SPI). This second component also invests in human capital, academic training in statistics, and on-the-job training of staff, when skills need to be improved. This will help address the shortage of statisticians with expertise and skills in specialized areas faced by countries in both regions, such as in national accounts, agricultural statistics, household surveys, trade statistics, financial statistics, and price statistics.
32. **The third component is designed to address shortcomings in physical and infrastructure and statistical modernization.** The working environment, and the availability of adequate equipment are important pillars for strengthening statistical capacity. They are important factors in the productivity of each NSS institution and its





performance. On the other hand, big data is increasingly becoming an important development that has the potential to significantly impact the activities of NSOs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, NSS were confronted with significant challenges in carrying out their activities using traditional statistics-gathering methods. As such, NSOs resorted to opportunities in other emerging sources of data to continue responding to some users' data needs. Big data has shown the potential to be used to complement official statistics in many areas to enable NSOs to execute their mandate of providing users with the necessary information. To harness this potential, NSOs must modernize their methods and their organization to keep pace with possibilities, especially in using advanced technologies and developing new, cost-effective methods to integrate data from a variety of sources. In this regard, the aim of this component is to improve the working environment and the modernization process of the NSOs.

**33. The fourth component is a project management component to oversee and supervise activities of the first three components.** In most of the participating countries, the National Statistics Offices are expected to be the implementing agencies of the project.

Legal Operational Policies	Triggered?
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No
Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60	No
Summary of Screening of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts	

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