



A challenging year for capacity development in statistics

At the time of writing, most of Statistics Norway's staff are working from home, as is the case for many of our partners. For national statistical institutes (NSI), the Covid-19 pandemic has caused many challenges to the production of statistics, including difficulties or even postponement of data collections due to restrictions on field work. At the same time, the demand for statistics has increased, and the Covid-19 pandemic has underlined the need for timely and accurate statistics. Statistics is needed to develop targeted measures to contain and mitigate the virus and help us understand the social and economic impact of the pandemic.

Statistics is also vital for surveying trends in a longer perspective. With only 10 years left to fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030, there is a need for more support to capacity building in statistics to accelerate the production of SDG indicators. Statistics Norway's new three-year strategy states that we shall contribute to the SDGs through our statistics programme and the international development work. We are committed to continue supporting international cooperation and capacity building in statistics, through and beyond the Covid-19 crisis.

The advantage of having access to administrative data has been underlined during the pandemic, when traditional data collection has become more difficult. This is an area where Statistics Norway is one of the most experienced NSIs in the world and we experience an increasing demand for support from our partners. We also participate in multilateral cooperation. The UN Statistics Division and the Global Partnership for Development Data has established a Collaborative on use of administrative data for statistical purposes. Statistics Norway is taking an active role in the work of the group and is co-chairing one of the task teams.

Our register-based system for statistics has been built in close cooperation with the data owners. This strong cooperation is also reflected in the international development work, with several data owners contributing to our projects as well as multi-institutional cooperation projects.

In this newsletter, we share our experiences so far with adjusting to international cooperation under the restrictions of Covid-19. Together with the rest of the world, we have had to adjust to remote working and online cooperation since March 2020. All our projects are affected, and many activities have been postponed. After eight months, our ability and attitude towards remote work has changed dramatically, and for many of us it has become a natural part of our working day. However, there are many challenges yet. For international cooperation not all the regular activities, working shoulder-to-shoulder, can be easily replaced by digital solutions.

Still, the past months have shown that a lot can be achieved through online cooperation. Remote workshops have sometimes turned out to be more efficient, with a more flexible schedule that can take place over a longer interval. In addition, there has been a huge increase in the availability of free webinars and training courses that are available to everyone with an internet connection. Face-to-face meetings will still be the cornerstone of our cooperation in the future but combining travel with remote activities will ensure better communication and follow-up between missions. In the long run, this will make our projects more sustainable and efficient, providing better value for our partners and strengthen international cooperation in statistics.

Introduction to our new Head of Division, Ms Janne Utkilen



Janne Utkilen
Head of Division
for International
Development
Cooperation.

On 1st September 2020, Ms Janne Utkilen started in her new post as the Head of Division for international development cooperation in Statistics Norway.

Ms. Utkilen has only been with the division since 2019 but has many years of experience from Statistics Norway and international cooperation. "I joined Statistics Norway in 2005, where I have been working with national accounts and business statistics. Last year I joined the Division for international development cooperation, where I had the opportunity to work on many interesting projects, including our new institutional cooperation project with Ethiopia."

Ms Utkilen has also spent seven years working abroad. "I have had the opportunity to work four years for Eurostat and three years for the UN World Food Programme (WFP) in Egypt and Tajikistan. In WFP I worked with food security statistics, while in Eurostat I worked in the team for international cooperation with the EU candidate countries. I enjoy working both with statistics and

international cooperation, so I am very excited to take on the role as leader for a division that combine these elements."

Taking over as Head of division during the Covid-19 pandemic have been challenging as many activities has been postponed, and all plans for 2020 had to be revised. "Certainly, the pandemic makes it more difficult to carry out many of our regular activities, as well as planning for next year given the uncertainties regarding when travels can be resumed. However, given the circumstances, we have seen a huge effort from both our partners and our team to continue working and adjusting activities to an electronic format. I am impressed with how much it has been possible to achieve with remote cooperation so far, and we are consistently getting better at it. Of course, we are all looking forward to being able to meet again, face to face, when the situation allows. Meanwhile, I am looking forward to continue the good cooperation we have established with our partners in NSIs and the international community."

Sharing experiences across institutions - using administrative registers for production of population statistics

Representatives from the Ethiopian Central Statistics Agency (CSA) and the Immigration, Nationality and Vital Event Agency (INVEA) visited Norway in February 2020 to learn about the register-based system for production of population statistics in Norway.

The use of administrative data for statistics relies on close inter-agency cooperation. In addition to Statistics Norway, the delegation met with the Norwegian Tax Administration, the Norwegian Mapping Authority and Norwegian Directorate of Immigration.

The visit is part of the new cooperation between Norway and Ethiopia, where the use of the civil registry for vital statistics (CRVS) is one of the components. Before the Covid-19 pandemic stopped all traveling activities, three missions to Ethiopia also took place. Due to Covid-19, the launch of the new three-year project is delayed, but remote activities have restarted in autumn 2020.



Ethiopian participants from INVEA and CSA in front of the new public library in Oslo in February 2020.

Training course in CSA's new training facilities in January 2020.



Annual meeting of the NSC-SSB cooperation

Statistics Norway (SSB) and the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (NSC) have had an institutional cooperation since 2006. During this period, SSB has worked together with NSC on improving processes within the Kyrgyz statistical system, both regarding technical solutions and organization of the institution. In the current project period, that started in January 2018, the cooperation has been expanded to also include the Norwegian Mapping Authority (NMA) and the State Agency on Land Resources (SALR). The overall goal of the current project is to increase the use of administrative data, to improve data quality, and to improve cooperation between public sector institutions.

On 13th of February 2020, SSB had its annual meeting with NSC where status of the project was reviewed, and plans were presented for the upcoming period. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Akylbek Sulatanov, the chairman of the NSC.

One of the topics that were discussed was that NSC will establish a resource centre for GIS with a dedicated leader. The unit will be in charge of the overall GIS strategy and implementation of GIS in NSC. The purpose and goal of the unit should be to take responsibility for GIS capacity building at NSC, with support from GIS experts at SSB, at least in the first phase. The unit will be responsible for defining a GIS-strategy for NSC and setting this in motion.

At the margins of the annual meeting the Chairman Mr. Sultanov awarded the medal of outstanding statistician of NSC to Ms. Anne Abelsæth. Ms. Abelsæth received the award for her contribution to strengthening the long-term cooperation between NSC and SSB and capacity building of NSC staff members.

Ms Anne Abelsæth awarded with the award 'outstanding statistician' by the Chairman of NSC, Mr Sultanov.



From physical planning to virtual implementation in Mozambique

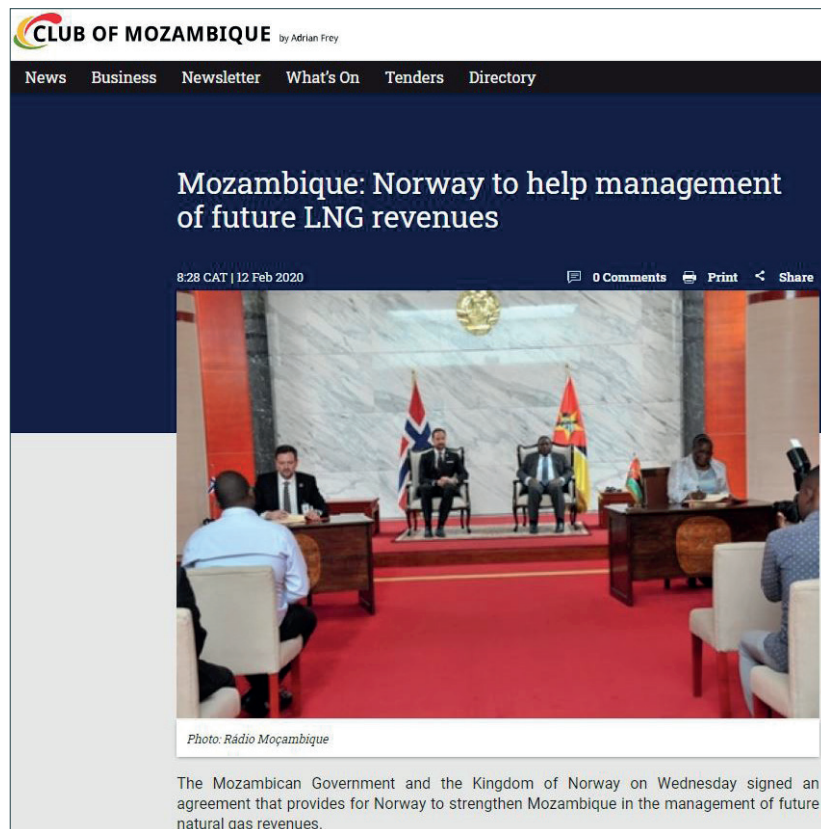
During the past two years, SSB and the Mozambique National Institute of Statistics (INE) have cooperated to map and plan for a statistical component under the Oil for Development programme in Mozambique. Several missions and study visits have been conducted. Areas where SSB's expertise can be used to establish and improve petroleum related statistics, as well as specific areas in the national accounts which are impacted by petroleum activities, have been identified. With the country-level agreement now in place, signed February 12th, 2020, the cooperation was ready to move from the planning phase and over to the 4-year implementation phase.

However, just as we were preparing to increase the work and activities the global Covid-19 pandemic hit and all plans for missions and study visits had to be put on hold. In close cooperation with INE we had to revise the activity plan and budget for 2020. Initially with the hope that we would be able to resume travels in the second half of 2020, but later under the precondition of no more travels in 2020.

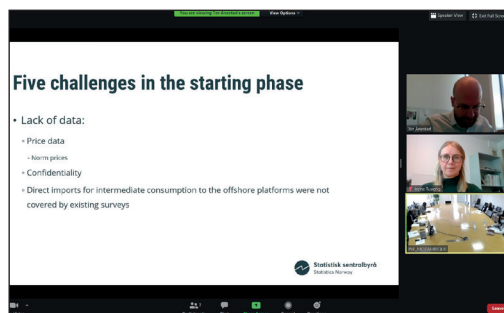
Luckily, INE has a functional video room with a good internet connection. This has made it possible for us to have fairly good quality virtual meetings with INE. We managed to re-plan for the second half of 2020 from physical short-term missions and study visits, to virtual subject matter meetings and work on development of a guideline on how to include the petroleum sector in the national accounts.

During the second half of 2020 the plan is to conduct these virtual subject matter meetings every 2 week (2-3 hours). This is a platform for staff from INE to meet and discuss with experts in SSB on matters of interest. The picture below is a screen shoot from one of these meetings. Here Tor Kristian Ånestad from SSB is talking about challenges Norway has had in implementing the oil sector in the national accounts system. At the same meeting INE made a presentation on their challenges, followed by a session where SSB answered question from INE. These meetings are also linked to the work with the guideline. The meetings follow the outline of this report and INE is asked to comment on written material sent out prior to the meeting. After each of these subject matter meetings, SSB provides INE with expanded written answers on key questions that came up during or on e-mail after the meeting.

In this way we hope that these meetings provide INE with tailor-made assistance on their most urgent needs in their daily work, and secures two-way communication and joint commitment and engagement even if we cannot work shoulder to shoulder.



In February, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Haakon of Norway visited Mozambique and was in attendance for the signing of the new In-Kind Agreement for the Oil for Development programme between the governments of Mozambique and Norway on February 12th. The Agreement was signed by Dag-Inge Ulstein, the Norwegian Minister of International Development, and by Verónica Nataniel Macamo Dlhovo, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Mozambique. This Agreement provides the framework for Norway to assist Mozambique in strengthening the comprehensive management of their petroleum resources.



Screenshoot from a subject matter webinar with INE in September about national accounts and inclusion of the petroleum sector. The meeting was held in Zoom. Participants from INE are sitting together in INEs video room and Tor Kristian Ånestad and Irene Tuveng (SSB) on individual lap tops.

Less work and greater outcome – combining poverty and food security analysis

In September, SSB and Norad agreed on a three-year project to improve food security statistics. Central partners will be The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and UN Committee of Experts on food security, agricultural and rural statistics (UN CEAG). The project seeks to contribute to improving food security statistics and analysis.

Both food security and poverty analyses can be based on data from Household Budget Surveys (HBS). It is a lot of work to prepare these data for poverty or food security analysis, and although the preparations have a lot in common, they are rarely done together. More commonly the work is done in “silos”, that is at different times and by different institutions and people. Furthermore, even if the National Statistics Offices (NSO) wanted to combine the work, there is no coherent recommendations on how to process data on poverty and consumption-based food security.

The “Food Security statistics project” aims at filling this need for coherent recommendations. The project will follow two parallel trajectories.

The first trajectory is to make a unified guideline for how to prepare data for food security statistics and poverty statistics. This will be done through a task force under the UN CEAG. The aim is to have the United Nations Statistics Commission (UNSC) discuss and endorse the guideline. Having the UNSC recommend the process will provide more clarity to the NSOs and others on how to implement it. This makes it crucial to involve the most knowledgeable and important actors on both food security and poverty analysis in developing the guidelines.

The second trajectory is regional and national capacity building aiming at producing data in accordance with the guidelines and using the statistics in analysis and regional cooperation. An important partner for the second trajectory is COMESA.

Why is the project important? When more and better statistics can be used for better policies and implementation of concrete programmes, it can contribute to improved food security in low- and middle-income countries. This is the overall goal of the project.

Interested in the UN CEAG task force on processing of household food consumption data?

Contact ellen.kiosterud@ssb.no

<https://www.bistandsaktuelt.no/arkiv-kommentarer/2020/ssb-statistikker-mat-korona-pandemi-befolkning/>

<https://www.ssb.no/en/inntekt-og-forbruk/artikler-og-publikasjoner/more-sustainable-eating-habits-in-the-countryside>

<https://www.ssb.no/inntekt-og-forbruk/artikler-og-publikasjoner/mer-baerekraftige-matvaner-pa-landet>

News from Norad on statistics

- New development programme on statistics and registers

The Knowledge Bank in Norad is investigating the possibility of establishing a new development programme on statistics and registers. We asked the acting director for the Knowledge Bank, Heidi Sandvand Hegertun, to share with us her thoughts about this new programme, how it came about and why she thinks it is important.

Reliable information is essential to monitor social and economic development. As most countries are struggling with the Covid-19 pandemic, progress on the 2030 Agenda is challenged, and updated statistics about the consequences of the pandemic is more important than ever.

The aim of the Knowledge Bank is to contribute to progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals through strengthening the capacity of our partner institutions. The Knowledge Bank is organized into different sector-specific knowledge programmes where Norwegian government bureaucrats share their experience in countries where Norwegian competence and knowledge is in demand.

The statistical system in Norway is to a large extent register based. The "Norwegian experience" is based on extensive digitali-

zation, integration and close cooperation between the four main institutions involved: Statistics Norway, the Norwegian Tax Administration, the Norwegian Mapping Authority and the National Coordinating Register for Legal Entities. Together they have established the so-called "base registers" for respectively population, properties and businesses. Statistics Norway regularly receives copies of these registers for producing statistical information. This approach is the basis for cost and time efficient quality statistics, where information is consistent and the respondent burden is minimized – which is an approach our partner countries may benefit from.

Our goal is that our partner countries should be self-sufficient in producing good and accurate policies, based on relevant and reliable information. Establishing a knowledge program for statistics and registers can be an essential building block in order to achieve Agenda 2030. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought the importance of accurate and reliable data for monitoring and decision making to the centre of attention. Norway remains committed to strengthen international collaboration on data, statistics and key registers.



Heidi Sandvand Hegertun,
Act. Director,
the Knowledge Bank,
Norad
Foto: Tanya Wallin



Mozambique



Khartoum



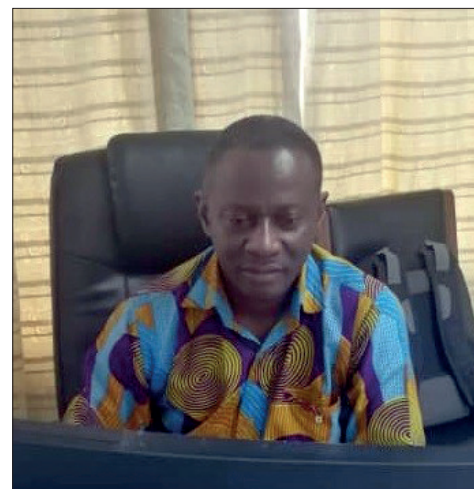
Tanzania

Introducing NADABAS – a National Account Database System – in Ghana

Ghana has been searching for a tool to organise and compile their national accounts for a while. During 2019 staff from the Ghana Statistical Service was introduced to and given a demonstration of NADABAS.

NADABAS is a useful tool for countries that use Microsoft Excel in compiling their national accounts. Though still using Excel, NADABAS provides a more robust solution by replacing links between workbooks with a database. It is a tool for designing an organised national accounts compilation system to improve the quality of their national accounts.

Due to travel restriction, videoconferencing will be used for training. A standard training package is expected to consist of a series of six to eight training sessions. Each session will take up to two hours and will go through the complete set up of the production accounts, include some theory, examples and exercises. The technical training will be provided by experts from Statistics Norway's national accounts division.



Francis Bright Mensah, Head of National Accounts Division at the Ghana Statistical Service. To read more about Ghana Statistical Service you can visit this web site <https://www.statsghana.gov.gh/>

The NADABAS website is launched

The new website for NADABAS, the National Accounts Database System, was launched in September 2020 (<http://www.nadabas.net>). On the website you can read more about NADABAS and find training material for using NADABAS. As new training material is developed by the NADABAS network, it will be made available on the website.

NADABAS is a free software for the compilation of national accounts. On the website you can register to get access to the latest version for the software.

NADABAS website:

<http://www.nadabas.net>



Preparing the launch of the NADABAS website.

The experience of a long-term consultant in Ukraine: Continuing cooperation during the Corona pandemic

I moved to Kiev in September 2018 as a long-term consultant to support the implementation of the institutional cooperation project between SSB and SSSU. My main task includes supporting the Norwegian experts visiting SSSU in Kiev, and to work closely with SSSU within the field of Metadata.

The project was running according to plan, both regarding timing and achievements, until 12 March of this year. The activities then came to an abrupt halt when travel restrictions were imposed due to the Covid-19 outbreak. A travel ban was implemented by both Norway and Ukraine within days. All staff from both statistical offices were asked to work remotely from home, and the majority still are, making it very difficult to fully continue planned activities - even online. The work changed to re-planning of the coming activities, reducing the efficiency of the project. The situation, as it is has become more normalised, has made it possible to plan for several digital activities this autumn.

Throughout the crisis, SSSU has kept up the statistical production according to plan, and dissemination of statistics is done in accordance with the publishing calendar. SSSU, as an institution, has proven itself strong and flexible during this challenging and unpredictable situation, which is of course gratifying.

For me as a long-term advisor in Kiev, these last months have been quite different from what I am used to. Communication with SSB and SSSU is done by e-mail and different tools for communication, such as Zoom, Teams and Skype. Frequent web-meetings are carried out, both planned and ad-hoc, covering both general planning and organisational matters as well as matters directly dealing with the different activities within the project components.

Personally, I am happy that I had the opportunity to stay in Kiev during this time. I have walking distance to the SSSU, and a separate project-office, so in late summer when restrictions were partly lifted I could return to the office.

As in many parts of the world, initially a comprehensive lock-down was introduced in Kiev. Now most of the public transport, restaurants and shops have reopened, but with some restrictions. Face masks are required in both public transport and in stores, but we are all getting used to that now.

Finally, I wish everyone to be safe and with hopes that we all can go back to normal as soon as possible. I hope the project will be running smoothly again, and that I will see many of you in Kiev in a not so far future.

Allan Henrysson, LTA, Kiev, Ukraine

The institutional cooperation project Statistics Norway (SSB) and the State Statistics Service of Ukraine (SSSU) has been cooperating since November 2017 on a project funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The project aims to strengthen the institutional capacity of SSSU and provide more and better statistics within specific statistical domains. So far, the project has included activities in the fields of price statistics, business statistics, crime statistics, dissemination, metadata, institutional development, IT infrastructure and others.



Chair of SSSU Mr Ihor Verner and part of his staff wearing face masks.

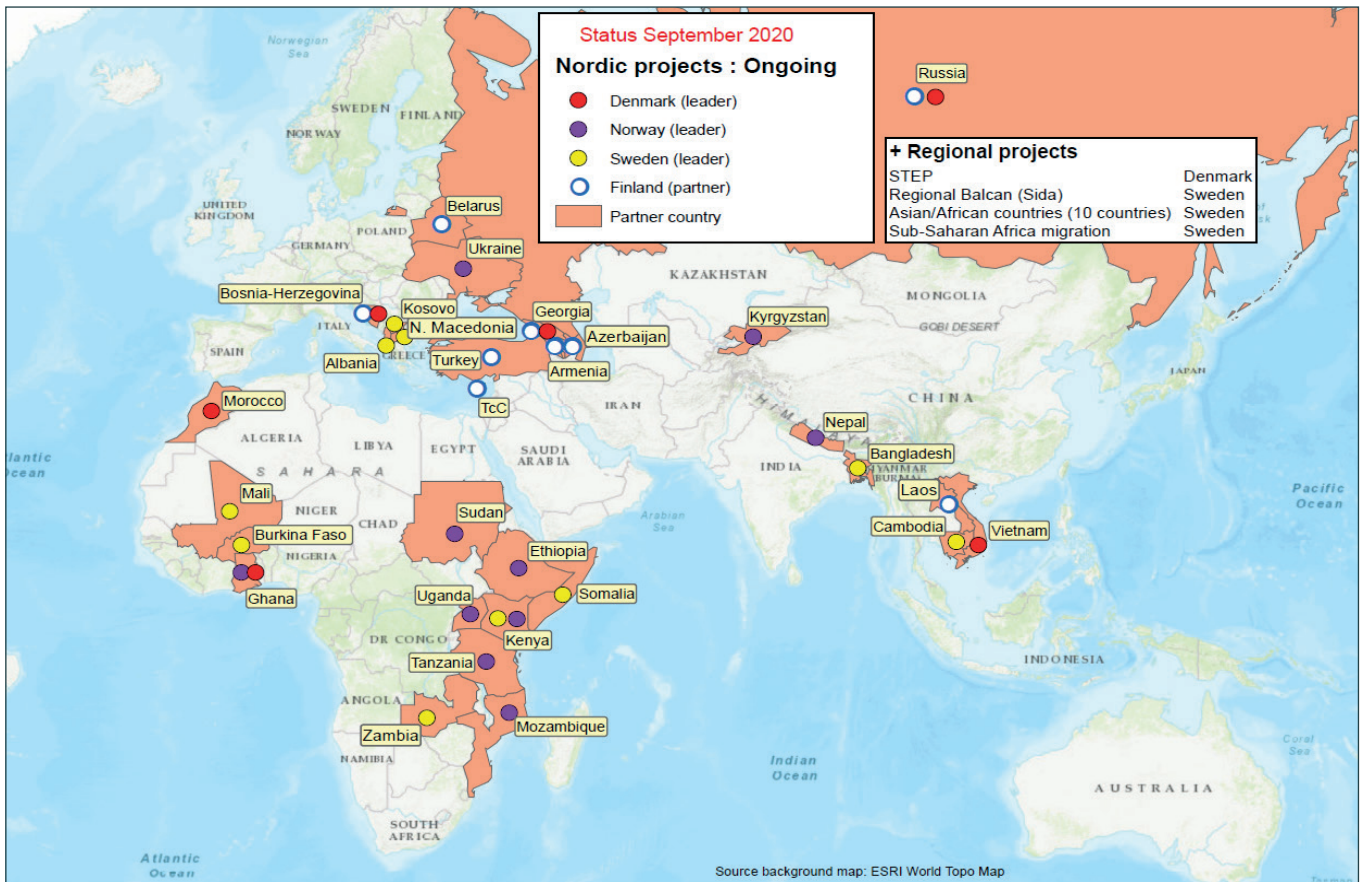
Nordic (virtual) Network Meeting

In the first week of September, the international units in the Nordic NSOs met to exchange recent experiences in their development work, with a special focus on how the countries have dealt with the effects of the corona virus. Combined, the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway) have cooperation projects in 32 partner countries (see map below) in addition to regional/thematic projects. The Nordic NSOs follow a common approach in their support, based on use of own experts, establishment of sustainable production processes and encouraging use of administrative registers for statistics. The projects range from general statistical development projects on economic and social statistics to more specialised programmes within energy, gender or migration statistics.

In August 2020, Statistics Sweden and Statistics Norway signed a framework agreement that stipulates terms and conditions for exchange of statistical experts for interna-

tional cooperation projects. It was discussed whether the other Nordic countries could also enter such an arrangement. Norway and Sweden have also cooperated on establishing a user network for Nadabas, a system for compilation of national accounts data. The system has Nordic origins and is widely used in the Eastern part of Africa. A future goal is that African Union, as a regional organisation, will be the custodian agency ensuring regional ownership for the system. A website was launched in September 2020 and this will be followed by a series of activities on trainings and technical assistance (see separate story about NADABAS).

The meeting was followed by a Webinar on how we have organised the international development work during the pandemic. Statistics Sweden and Danida Fellowship Centre presented their experiences. Around 60-70 participants from NSOs, other governments institutions as well as international organisations took part in the webinar.



Nordic Network Meeting



Nordic Network Meeting. Partner countries in Africa, Asia and Europe.

Countries where Statistics Norway has Institutional Cooperation



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