Summary Report

Regional Training Workshop on Economic Statistics SDMX

24-28 Feb 2020, Manila, Philippines

Under invitation and logistic support of the ARISE Plus Cambodia, four officials from the General Department of Customs and Excise of Cambodia (GDCE) and the Ministry of Commerce (MoC) were attending the Regional Training Workshop on Economic Statistics SDMX (Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange) in Manila on 24-28 February 2020. The participation of these four officials were additional to the participation of three officials from the National Institute of Statistics of Cambodia (NIS), which was supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The event was held at the Asian Development Bank Headquarters.

The ARISE Plus Cambodia's support for the officials from GDCE and MoC to attend the SDMX training was one of the project's strategic initiatives to address issues related to trade statistics in Cambodia. Their participation in the workshop was clearly a potential strategy to build their statistical capacity, which could possibly lead to improvement in generation and publication of trade statistics. Together with the NIS participants, the ARISE Plus Cambodia expected that the additional participation of officials from GDCE and MoC would improve inter-ministerial communication and cooperation on trade statistics as the generation of custom data falls under mandate of the GDCE, while NIS and MoC are both regular users of custom data.

The SDMX regional training workshop was organized by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) in collaboration with the ADB, the ASEAN Statistics Division (ASEANstats), and the EU-ASEAN ARISE Plus Project. SDMX is an ISO standard designed to describe statistical data and metadata, normalize their exchange, and improve their efficient sharing across statistical and similar organizations. The objectives of the workshop, therefore, were to introduce the general concepts of SDMX; train subject matter experts and IT experts on specific global Data Structure Definitions (DSDs) of the System of National Account (SNA) and International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS) and SDMX tools respectively; conduct mapping exercise between national database codes and SDMX codes; and identify the interested countries for SDMX pilot project implementation.

The training workshop was physically participated by 34 participants from nine ASEAN countries, with remote attendance of participants from Brunei Darussalam. On Day 1, participants were provided an overview of SDMX, including its core concepts, definitions, and artifacts. On Day 2, participants were separated into three small groups based on their expertise (IMTS, SNA, and IT) to learn more about how their respective topics function on the SDMX format. On Day 3, participants were explained and shown how IMTS and SNA data could be transformed into the SDMX format using an internet-based SMART tool and IT infrastructure. During the whole Day 4, participants practiced converting their own country data into the SDMX format. On the last day, there was a plenary discussion on individual participants' reflections on the training and country's readiness for a pilot project.

Through this assistance, the ARISE Plus Cambodia has made notable contributions to improving trade statistics capacity of Cambodia and potentially of other ASEAN member states as well. In addition to gaining own new knowledge of SDMX, the GDCE officials helped enhance understanding of the NIS and MoC participants on how Cambodian custom data is collected and coded, through their technical inputs during the workshop. It is very important for the officials from NIS to have this clear understanding to avoid any mistakes when converting original country custom data into the SDMX format. This benefit might also be extended to participants from other countries since majority of them are statisticians, but not custom officials. In the plenary discussion on the last day of the workshop, a Filipino participant commended the GDCE officials for their invaluable technical inputs on custom procedure code and announced that the two country teams would keep communicating to exchange their experiences.

All of the Cambodian participants appreciated this training opportunity and highly valued the importance of SDMX despite demonstrating different levels of readiness for a pilot project. The ARISE Plus Cambodia will make a follow-up discussion with the NIS on the SDMX pilot project as a strategy to improve publication and inter-agency sharing of trade and investment statistics since the SDMX will allow automation of data sharing and simplification of complex trade data. At the same time, the project will further pursue the GDCE to explore what the two bodies could do to support the NIS to implement a pilot project.