

## **Strengthening the Statistical System of Government of India**

A sound and dynamic statistical system is the cornerstone for an informed citizenry, data-driven policies, and decision-making. Official statistics play a pivotal role in addressing societal challenges and promoting inclusive growth. The government is taking many steps to strengthen administrative and survey statistics, build capacities, and improve data quality and timeliness.

### **MoSPI, the cornerstone**

MoSPI is the nodal ministry for the planned and integrated development of the Indian statistical system. MoSPI anchors the core statistics by publishing GDP, price and volume indices, and countrywide macroeconomic and sectoral importance surveys. The ministry has initiated various new surveys, namely, the annual survey of unincorporated sector enterprises and a time-use survey, and it has started a pilot for an annual survey of service sector enterprises. MoSPI is also working towards increasing the frequency of PLFS data and extending the generation of quarterly estimates for rural areas. Modern IT tools are being adopted for improved data capturing and processing. A National Metadata Structure is also being developed to encourage greater use of administrative data. MoSPI has envisaged the Unified Data Portal project to create a centralized database and storage system. Ministries are also taking initiatives to enhance the frequency of various surveys to make more informed policy decisions. Given India's 2047 goals, it is essential for development policy that (a) MoSPI is capacitated fully to produce and integrate all required statistics with the desired quality, regularity, and timeliness and (b) the

quality and timeliness of administrative and transactional data of the line Ministries are brought to levels that fully facilitate timely course corrections.

### **Further steps to strengthen the statistical database**

- a) An extensive exercise for base revision of critical economic statistics is being taken up at MoSPI. The exercise to change the base year of CPI from 2012 to 2024 has been initiated. An Advisory Committee on National Accounts Statistics has been set up to decide the GDP base year. The base year of critical data series, such as the GDP, different price indices, and volume indices, such as the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), must be updated to the most recent feasible year as soon as possible. The ongoing efforts to construct the producer price index for goods and services may be expedited to have a more excellent grasp of episodes of cost-push inflation. State-level variants of indices like IIP will help understand the emerging geographical patterns. Survey data to help understand private sector capital formation at regular intervals will also help policy formulation.
- b) The high-frequency price monitoring data for essential food items collected by different departments may be linked so that the build-up of prices at each stage, from the farm gate to the final consumer, is quantifiable and monitorable. This will help improve the effectiveness of the government's administrative action to stabilize the prices of essential food items.
- c) More than 1.3 crore entities are registered under GST and file returns. The granular GST data, if made available, has excellent potential to analyze the health of businesses, screen loan applications, provide support for cash

flow-based lending, and deeply understand the economies of different geographies.

d) The XV Finance Commission observes, "The CAG, which is mandated to carry out the role of accounts compilation and finalization for almost all the States, as well as being the auditor of both the Union and the States, is already in the process of establishing common fiscal data standards. This would eventually ensure the availability of standardized data through a public web portal for granular level fiscal statistics of the Union and the States, both for historic audited fiscal data and high-frequency fiscal data for the current year in downloadable database formats." Granular time series, in database formats, of audited accounts of the Union and the States will make fiscal analysis and policy much more accessible.

e) Regular indicators of the dynamics of production and employment in MSMEs are essential, considering their potential for growth and job creation.

f) Information may be published on industry-wise gross disbursement of bank credit (as opposed to the data on outstanding credit currently available), industry-wise monthly gross financial flows through domestic and external equity and debt routes, and other financing sources.

g) A regular mechanism, at least annually, is also needed to aggregate the financial flows to infrastructure and physical progress—sectorally and geographically differentiated—achieved in different infrastructure sectors.

h) The large volume of data generated by schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana and Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, which capture details such as hospital admissions, patients' medical history, or

demographic details. These can be used for disease surveillance, preventive medication, etc.

i) The Labour Bureau is also tasked with conducting five surveys on workers and employment. Ensuring the rigor, timeliness, and user-friendliness of data and making it available in database formats will help with analysis and policy.

The thrust on evidence also necessitates that the process and impact evaluation capacities in the Union and State Governments and universities are nurtured and driven towards maturity in a time-bound manner.

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