

# STATISTICAL DATA AND INFORMATION SERVICES

## 35.1 INTRODUCTION

During the period of the Eighth Development Plan, work continued on developing databases and information bases to meet the increasing needs for statistical data and information, which are critical inputs for economic, social and environmental development planning, in addition to their use in civil, academic, economic and social institutions. In view of the integration of the national economy into the global system, especially since the accession of the Kingdom to the WTO at the end of 2005, demand by various international institutions for data and information has increased.

The Kingdom kept pace with all the above developments. There was marked progress during the Eighth Development Plan in sectoral and specialized databases. Population, economic and social statistics were expanded and diversified, and their timelines developed in line with the requirements of their varied usages. Moreover, efforts were made to ensure that statistical surveys are carried out regularly within specific time cycles.

The Ninth Development Plan envisages continuation of efforts and plans to develop statistical data in the public and the private sectors and expand their coverage; in addition to continuing to build the statistical capacity of various agencies, based on international best practice. The plan also envisages developing social statistics, diversifying the price index, and providing social indicators for regions and major cities. Moreover, to be able to measure performance in each sector and formulate plans for future developments, the Plan aims at developing databases for various sectors. Furthermore, the time cycle of several indicators will be reduced, as will be the timelines for providing and disseminating various data.

This chapter presents the current conditions of the services of the Central Department of Statistics and Information (CDSI) and the developments that took place under the Eighth Development Plan. It also reviews the key issues and challenges that need to be addressed under the Ninth Development Plan, assesses projected demand for the services of the Department, and presents the future vision, the objectives, policies and targets set for it under the Ninth Development Plan.

## **35.2 CURRENT CONDITIONS**

### **35.2.1 Statistical Information**

The CDSI, which is responsible for the organization of the statistical sector, expanded the scope of its statistical researches and studies to cover a number of social and economic activities. It also developed its statistical bulletins and periodicals to monitor economic, social and demographic changes more comprehensively and faster. For their part, most government agencies and public institutions provided various detailed statistical bulletins on their sectoral tasks and activities.

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Under the Eighth Development Plan, the detailed results of the 2004 General Census of Population and Housing were published. The Census constituted a general framework for population and social development research, and a reference base for a number of studies conducted by various agencies, including the Atlas of Population and Housing prepared by CDSI published in 2007. In addition, results of the 2003 Establishment Census, which constitutes a framework and an important resource for the annual economic researches, as well as for periodic surveys, were published. Over the period, preparations were completed for the General Census of Population and Housing to be conducted in 2010, followed in the same year by the Economic Establishment Census.

The statistical surveys system developed significantly, both in terms of the topics addressed and the depth and comprehensiveness of the surveys conducted. Moreover, surveys were organized in specific time cycles. Over the period of the Eighth Plan, various surveys were conducted (Table 35.1), including:

**Table 35.1**  
**Implemented Statistical Surveys**  
**Eighth Development Plan**

Description	Date of Last Survey	Frequency	Notes
<b>Population and Social surveys:</b>			
Demographic Survey	2007	Every 5 years	Studies demographic, economic and social phenomena of population
Population and Environment Survey	2007	Every 5 years	Provides information on the characteristics of houses and the services and infrastructure to which they are connected
Disability survey	2007	Every 5 years	Identifies characteristics of the disabled in terms of size, type of disability and proliferation
Manpower Survey	2009	Semi-Annually	Provides economic, social and demographic data on manpower, both employed and unemployed
Household Expenditure and Income Survey	2007	Every 5 years	Provides data on averages and percentages of household income and expenditure on goods and services
Statistics on Pilgrims	2009	Annually	Provides data on pilgrims, such as numbers, nationalities and gender
Directory of Services	2006	Every 3 years	Inventories services available in every population centre
<b>Economic surveys:</b>			
Survey of economic Establishments	2009	Annually	Provides data on economic activities and updates databases for specialized economic research
Survey of Tourism	2007	Every 5 years	Measures participation of the tourism sector in the development process
Survey of Finance and Insurance	2007	Every 5 years	Provides data on finance and insurance activity
New Enterprises Survey	2007	Every 2 years	Identifies rates of growth of enterprises
Foreign Investment Survey	2008	Every 2 years	Provides data on the volume of foreign investment and its sources
Economic Indicators Survey	2009	Quarterly	Provides indicators for the purpose of preparing estimates of the quarterly national accounts
Survey of Manufacturing Production	2009	Quarterly	Provides an index for industrial production
Cost of living Index	Continuous survey	Monthly	Builds price-movement indices for wholesale goods and services weighted by their relative contributions to total cost of living expenditure
Wholesale Price Index	Continuous survey	Quarterly	Builds price movement indices for wholesale goods and services
Average Prices	Continuous survey	Monthly	Monitors price movement of goods and services by usage

*Source: Central Department of Statistics and Information.*

- Population and social surveys: demographic surveys and household expenditure and income surveys every five years, manpower survey on a biannual basis, and others.
- Economic surveys: foreign investment and new institution surveys every two years; annual economic survey of institutions; and quarterly finance, insurance and tourism surveys and economic indicators and industrial production surveys.

CDSI continued to prepare the monthly cost of living index and the quarterly wholesale price index; and in a complementary step, a monthly report on average prices for a basket of selected goods and services was launched in 2009.

Within the framework of reports and statistical studies, efficiency of national accounts was enhanced by adding a quarterly report to supplement the annual one, as well as by launching an annual report of national accounts in accordance with the 1993 system. Moreover, another set of annual, quarterly and monthly statistics on foreign trade was also launched (Table 35.2).

Furthermore, there was clear improvement in the scope and quality of the statistical data provided by government agencies and public institutions. Most agencies publish detailed and periodic data on their activities and services. This development was most pronounced in financial data and statistics, spurred by the expansion of activity in the local and regional financial markets, especially stock and bond markets, as well as in the emerging promising economic sectors, such as tourism and investment.

**Table 35.2**  
**Implemented Reports and Statistical Studies**  
**Eighth Development Plan**

Description	Year of Last Issue	Frequency	Notes
National Accounts Report	2009	Annually	Includes estimates of GDP by sector; and domestic demand, inflation rates, export and import data. Issued at current year end
National Accounts Bulletins according to the 1993 and 1968 Systems	2008	Annually	Estimates GDP at current and fixed prices; in addition to the consolidated accounts, national income, disposable income, capital formation and others
National Accounts Indicators	2009	Quarterly	Estimates quarterly GDP by economic sector
Export Statistics Bulletin	2008	Annually	Monitors movement of exports of goods
Import Statistics Bulletin	2008	Annually	Monitors movement of imports of goods
Trade Bulletin	2008	Annually	Monitors movement of exports and imports over 10 years with the most important 60 countries, and the trade balance and main goods during the year
Monthly Report on Saudi Non-Oil Exports and Imports	Continuous	Monthly	Monitors movement of non-oil exports and imports of goods during the month
Indices of Foreign Trade Bulletin	2008	Annually	Measures values and quantities of exported and imported goods
Monthly Cost of Living Index Bulletin	Continuous	Monthly	Monitors movement of wholesale goods prices of a basket of goods and services weighted by their relative contributions to total expenditure
Wholesale Price Index Bulletin	Continuous	Quarterly	Monitors movements of wholesale prices of goods and services
Statistical Yearbook and Statistical Indicator	2009	Annually	Monitors and documents statistical information and data, and highlights activities of governmental and non-governmental agencies
Atlas of Population and Housing	2006	Upon publication of detailed census results	Presents the detailed results of the Census on Atlas maps

*Source: Central Department of Statistics and Information.*

### **35.2.2 Provision of Timely Data and Information**

Developments in the statistics and information sector were not limited to the amount and scope of data, but there was also improvement in their accuracy and reliability. This improvement is attributed to the maturity of many databases, especially with the accumulation of experience and the development of the technical and administrative capabilities of the agencies involved, as well as the high level of transparency and increasing demand for accurate data by society and various economic, social and civil sectors. In addition, the provision of information through local networks and the internet contributed to enhancing the credibility of information.

Availability of timely statistical data and information and their issuing within fixed timeframes are the most prominent determinants of data quality. Under the Eighth Development Plan, there was significant improvement, with most statistical publications issued to a large extent within specific time periods and the time cycle of some reduced to annually, quarterly and monthly. Efforts designed to effect further improvement are expected to continue. Moreover, the timing of statistical releases improved, with the duration between the end of the statistical period and the date of issue of the related statistical bulletin reduced. Financial information services in general, and those related to trading in the stock market in particular, represent an advanced case, with data on direct trading operations provided through various means of communication, primarily mobile phones and the internet.

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### **35.2.3 Statistical Capacity Building**

Expansion of the scope of statistical data and improvement in their timeliness and reliability was accompanied by further statistical capacity building, both at the CDSI and at governmental and private agencies. Under the Eighth Development Plan, there were continued efforts to advance the National Computer Centre, administered by CDSI, through developing systems and software applications and databases, as well as through strengthening the capacity for digital authentication of the outputs of censuses, surveys and statistical

research. Moreover, technical services provided by the CDSI to agencies associated with the Centre were improved, with the aim of helping these agencies to utilise their systems and programmes to enhance the efficiency of the information network.

Over the period, statistical maps based on geographic information systems were developed and utilised in conducting censuses and statistical research. The maps improve the efficiency and productivity of census operations by installing population definitions, identifying and updating locations of statistical samples, through linking topographical data with the plans of cities and centres.

The e-government transactions project “YESSER” that was launched in 2005 enhanced the statistical capacity and the databases of various government agencies, taking advantage of the close interrelationship and functional integration among them. The project aspires to build a standard government statistical database that supports e-transactions, which requires technical and human skills capacity building and development in ICT in all government departments and public institutions.

Dissemination of statistical data and information was expanded, benefiting from the multimedia capabilities provided by ICT. Most statistics and data have become available through websites of the agencies on the internet, as well as through print and electronic statistical bulletins. The Kingdom participates in the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) sponsored by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

#### **35.2.4 Institutional and Organizational Development**

Council of Ministers Resolution No.284 of 2005 ordered the restructuring and reorganisation of the statistics and information sector to enhance its capabilities and improve its efficiency to enable it to meet the growing demand by public and private institutions and individuals. The following are some of the most prominent provisions of the Resolution:

- Assigning the task of collecting information to the renamed Central Department of Statistics and Information (CDSI)
- Forming a national committee, with representatives from a number of government agencies, to coordinate and consolidate efforts, both among government agencies and between them and the CDSI. The Committee will also develop effective mechanisms to ensure an effective flow of information among the various parties, in addition to a series of projects designed to provide a national bank of statistical information that will meet requests for information on all fields.
- Various agencies should provide the CDSI with statistical data and information automatically and regularly on time.
- Government agencies that do not have units for statistics and information are to establish such units and enhance their capabilities.

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Also the Council of Ministers Resolution No. 235 of 2007 confirmed the CDSI as the main and official reference for all information and statistical data and highlighted its tasks, which include: implementation of population, economic and social censuses; and compilation, tabulation and analysis of information and statistical data taken from administrative records of government agencies. The Resolution also stipulated that the CDSI conduct studies and present proposals for developing the statistics and information sector; make regulations, methods and various classifications compatible with international standards; establish a centralised information system linked automatically to all government agencies; and engage actively in the establishment of the National Bank of Information and Statistics. The Resolution also pointed to the need for finding a mechanism through which statistical services, researches and studies in both the public and the private sectors would be provided in a commercial manner similar to that practised in some developed countries.



## 35.3 ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

### 35.3.1 Regional Databases

Regional statistical databases have become comprehensive and highly reliable, particularly data on public services and infrastructure. Nevertheless, databases on a number of sectors are not consistent with the requirements of economic and social development. Hence, efforts should be made to bridge the gap in national statistics, through development of regional data on economic, social, financial, commercial and industrial sectors, for these improve the efficiency of local development and support regionally balanced development.

### 35.3.2 Price index

In addition to supporting studies on, and planning, implementation and operation of programmes and projects, indicators are the most important determinants of management of socioeconomic development. On that basis, the price index was developed under the Eighth Development Plan, and is now available on a monthly basis, both at the national level and at the level of major cities. However, developments at all levels require the availability of indicators that are more representative of the economic and social situation of major segments of society, concurrently reflecting the demographic, geographic and spatial dimensions of the Kingdom. Moreover, there is a need for developing price sub-indices to serve specific socioeconomic management purposes and private sector activities. This would require continuous efforts to keep pace with developments, while adopting international best practices.

### 35.3.3 Dissemination of Statistical Data

Due to economic, technical and knowledge developments all over the world, modern economies are characterized by rapid dynamics that require the use of correct scientific methodologies to measure statistics over shorter periods and in regular cycles, in order to provide economic, financial and administrative indicators efficiently and

accurately. Achievements made in this regard were noted above, with some of the important indicators being measured semi-annually or quarterly, and the price index and foreign trade statistics monthly. Nevertheless, semi-annual, even quarterly, cycles are no longer sufficient for a number of indicators, such as national accounts and key labour market indicators.

Hence, efforts should be made to develop the statistical data cycle, for it to correspond to international practices and to the requirements of a modern economy. This, in turn, requires supplying the CDSI in a timely manner with the key basic data that enter into the calculation of the indicators, while ensuring that such data cover the required details in accordance with standard statistical classifications. Moreover, indicators have to be published immediately at the end of the statistical cycle concerned.

### **35.3.4 Private Sector Administrative Data and Indicators**

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Companies and enterprises have comprehensive information on their various activities, including, for example, investment expenditure, operating expenses, wages, and procurements. Periodic collection of such data at both the sectoral and the national levels, and derivation of economic and financial indicators from them would significantly benefit all agencies and enterprises in both the public and the private sectors. Hence, it would be beneficial to use the administrative data and information available at the private sector, through developing the requisite institutional and organizational capacities.

## **35.4 DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

### **35.4.1 Future Vision**

Providing diverse, advanced and comprehensive databases on all economic and social variables, characterised by accuracy and reliability, both in terms of reliability and timeliness, to which all public and private entities contribute, each according to its function and competence; all overseen by the CDSI.

### 35.4.2 Objectives

- Providing statistical data and information, covering economic, social, and demographic activities and developments.
- Enhancing the efficiency and reliability of statistical data and information.
- Building and developing the national statistical capacity.

### 35.4.3 Policies

- Encouraging all agencies and public and private institutions to build and disseminate comprehensive databases on their activities.
- Strengthening the function of CDSI: preparation and dissemination of statistical data and coordination of national databases.
- Providing a variety of statistical indicators within multiple timeframes.
- Applying international standards for data dissemination, following up, and applying new ones.
- Supporting and developing the establishment of statistical units in all government agencies and institutions.
- Supporting the establishment of professional associations and encouraging them to provide statistical data.

### 35.4.4 Targets

- Implementing the General Census of Population and Housing, the Census of Economic Establishments, and the Census of Agriculture and Industry.
- Carrying out the annual demographic, social and economic survey of establishments.
- Implementing specialized economic surveys, covering specific economic sectors, such as construction, industry and tourism, including data and statistical information on the inputs and

outputs of each sector by type of service, production, value added, manpower distribution, operating expenses, wages and income.

- Continuing to develop and issue statistical publications, such as: the National Accounts Bulletin; the bulletin on statistics on foreign trade (exports and imports); and the bulletin on price statistics, cost of living indices, wholesale price indices, and average prices, along with implementing a special programme to monitor the quality of price data.
- Developing the website of CDSI in form and content to meet all the needs of beneficiaries and reflect developments in CDSI activities.

### **35.5 FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS**

The total estimated financial requirements for CDSI under the Ninth Development Plan amount to SR1.5 billion.