



## **Asia-Pacific Conference on Measuring Well-Being and Fostering the Progress of Societies**

# *Conclusions*

Martine Durand  
OECD Chief Statistician and Director of Statistics  
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# Main aims of the conference

- **Deepen on-going reflection on how to measure the well-being and progress of societies in Asia-Pacific region;**
- **Discuss which new well-being measures are needed to analyse and address key policy issues;**
- **Lead to concrete outputs, such as establishing frameworks for future work.**

# Conclusions

- **There is a global movement towards going beyond GDP, highlighted by the recent UN resolution proposed by Bhutan and adopted by consensus (both developed and developing); and a number of country specific initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region;**
- **There is a demand for a new well-being based development framework and it is up to the official statistical community to respond to this; implications for post-MDG discussions;**
- **The measurement of well-being goes beyond GDP and money income, requiring the consideration of both objective and subjective dimensions. The measurement of well-being should start from individuals and consider societal well-being as a goal;**
- **It is important that that the Asia-Pacific regional voice in the field of measuring well-being be conveyed to the 4<sup>th</sup> World Forum in New Delhi in October 2012, with proposals for specific outputs and future activities.**

# Material conditions

- Importance of measuring informality, under employment, quality of education, and social protection;
- Importance of taking into account assets, and their distribution, in addition to income;
- The Asia-Pacific region is leading in terms of GDP growth and urbanisation, which raises challenges for how we measure living conditions in urban centres;
- Need to move beyond the standard measures of extreme poverty used in poor countries; developing measures that capture the emergence of an increasing middle class in the region (e.g. taking account of the cost of urban living).

# Sustainability and future challenges

- Ageing poses particular challenges for assessing and measuring well-being in the Asia-Pacific region; it is important to take account of the life stages of individuals;
- Women confront specific well-being challenges such as caring for children and the elderly, dealing with unfriendly working environments, and discrimination more generally;
- Governance should be recognised as a separate dimension of well-being. However, there is still a need to design a better conceptual framework and translate this into tangible statistical standards - recognising the differences in types of governments in the region.
- Governments need to manage extreme risks, recognising both their perceived and actual consequences for well-being; providing transparent information is critical.

# Quality of life and societal behaviour

- **Several countries in the region have existing programmes to measure subjective well-being and are already using the results to influence policy - although some noted the need for greater clarity in terms of concepts and policy use;**
- **Social and family relations are very important for many dimensions of well-being; ageing, urbanisation and internet are changing the nature and quality of social relations;**
- **Time use surveys have the potential to better inform on the well-being of individuals, such as work-life balance, caring, leisure, social relations; some data exist but NSOs in the region need to increase their capacity to analyse them and achieve further harmonisation and add items .**

# Some cross-cutting issues

- Measures of well-being; need to take into account different spatial units (urban/rural, regions, cities);
- Cultural differences are important;
- Need for further research in a number of dimensions (subjective well-being, governance, social ties);
- Varied statistical capacities in different countries in the face of increased demand for new measures; ESCAP statistical committee should play a key role to promote and coordinate efforts in the Asia-Pacific region;
- Respective roles of official and non-official sources of statistics; private/public partnership;
- Leverage the contribution of the scientific and business communities (e.g. By creating an Asia-Pacific research network and a blog hosted by Wikiprogress, as well as to promote other regional and local academic initiatives);
- Engage and communicate with the public.

# Contribution to the New Delhi Forum

- **Some important Asia-Pacific well-being issues have been identified:**
  - **Demographics/ageing/youth**
  - **Gender**
  - **Governance (presentation of ABS conceptual work in New Delhi)**
  - **Natural disasters**
- **Pressure on statistical system needs to be recognised**
- **The role of development partners in statistical capacity building be recognized**
- **Organising Committee to finalise conclusions and agree on other documents to be prepared for New Delhi**