

Reviving the Production of National Accounts and Implementing the System of National Accounts (SNA 2008)

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Abstract

Beginning from the late 1990's the Central Statistical Office began to suffer low response rates to its economic surveys that were conducted on establishments using mail questionnaires. Normally Zimbabwe used to conduct an annual Census of Industrial Production (CIP) covering formal sector establishments engaged in mining, manufacturing, electricity generation and distribution, water supply and reticulation and construction. Other establishment based surveys included the Quarterly Employment Inquiry (QEI) covering all kinds of activities, the Volume of Manufacturing Index (VMI) survey, the Business Tendency Survey (BTS) covering mining and manufacturing some commercial agricultural questionnaires as well special income questionnaires sent to non profit making bodies and transport operators. With response rates to the CIP falling below 20% the last published report on that survey before 2009 was for 1999. The results from the other surveys generally fizzled out by 2005 and 2006.

By 2006 in addition to the poor response rates the CSO also began to have no resources (financial for paper and printing of questionnaires as well as postage) to carry out the surveys. These were later compounded by hyperinflation. The surveys mentioned above are the major ones on which the compilation of national accounts was traditionally based.

In 2010, the statistical office, having transformed into a semi-autonomous Agency, the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT), received funding to resume conducting economic surveys. It carried out the CIP covering the years 2005 and 2009, the VMI (2006 to 2010), the QEI (2006 to March 2010) and the BTS 2010.

Before the collapse of the supply of raw data for the traditional production of National Accounts, CSO had implemented the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA93) only with respect to the production account and the generation of income account. Beyond that however the concepts and definitions used in treating any item were those of SNA93, except where the raw data available could not allow such a treatment. Looking at the available data it would have been easy to then implement SNA93 with respect to the Capital and Financial Accounts before finally tackling the use of income and the income distribution accounts.

This paper examines the methods that were used to make some GDP estimates without the traditional sources of data and without good alternatives either and later, in the face of hyperinflation. It also examines the way forward with respect to (i) firming up the estimates for which there was no survey data and (ii) generally reviving national accounts production and implementing the SNA2008.