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Session: The use of administrative data, big data and other data sources

“Use of administrative data source for production of SBR in Myanmar”

Introduction

Myanmar has a highly decentralized statistical system. Different Government departments and agencies establish their own statistical units to produce the respective statistics based on their own purpose and needs. Central Statistical Organization (CSO) plays a key role in the National Statistical System. The Central Statistical Organization (CSO) is the National Statistical Authority as well. Official statistics in Myanmar are collected and compiled by the Central Statistical Organization (CSO).

The Central Statistical Organization (CSO) established the Statistical Business Register (SBR) in 2018 to improve economic statistics and to provide survey frame for business surveys. The Central Statistical Organization (CSO) uses the business register statistics maintained by the City Development Committee (CDCs) and Development Affair Organizations (DAOs) which are the primary source for updating the CSO Statistical Business Register.

Administrative data is very important for update of business register. According to Myanmar Statistics Law, enacted the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law No.2/2018, administrative record means the record collected, compiled and maintained for the purpose of administrative matters other than the purpose of statistical process.

It is vital to establish and maintain good relations with the owners of data sources, administrative sources. Administrative source increases the quality of the SBR by providing access to more up-to-date information on key characteristics, such as Name and address, size in terms of number of employees and/ or turnover. The use of administrative data in CSO for SBR has delivered many benefits to CSO and other data users.

This paper will present: (1) Background of CSO SBR (2) Data source of the SBR (3) Cooperation with the owners of administrative data (4) Maintenance and update of the SBR (5) Challenges in using administrative data; and (6) Conclusion.

Background of CSO SBR

The Central Statistical Organization (CSO) conducted the Myanmar Business Survey (MBS) in 2015 with the purpose of knowing better understand business and industry in Myanmar. CSO had many challenges in conducting the survey, especially in survey fame. Almost a quarter (23%) of the sampled business are missing. It has also poor MSIC (Myanmar Standard Industrial Classification) coding and business address. According to the lesson learned from Myanmar Business Survey, CSO recognized that it needs to develop a new source for economic and social surveys.

Economic Census is very useful instrument when a country is initiating an economic statistics programme. It provides benchmark data. Economic census is used in many developing countries and some developed countries, including the USA. Myanmar CSO is having a growing interest in economic census. In Myanmar, economic census has never been conducted before. To conduct the economic census, CSO needs assistant from the Development Partners both in terms of resources and guidance on how to carry out this activity properly. Therefore, CSO decided to establish the Statistical Business Register (SBR) system before CSO cannot afford to conduct the economic census due to having the limitation of budget and technical experts.

In 2018, the CSO established the Statistical Business Register (SBR) team to implement and maintain the Statistical Business Register (SBR). Lack of information about business demography; diverse registering/ licensing agencies; difficult to get survey frame list for all types of businesses; and cannot afford to conduct the economic census are the main reasons for establishing the SBR in Myanmar.

Data source of the CSO SBR

Business registration and licensing agencies are diverse in Myanmar. The different government authorities are responsible for registering and licensing businesses. For instance, only larger business is required to register at the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA). Small-Scale Industries Department (SSID) covers only registration of small-scale industries such as weaving enterprises and handicrafts.

The CSO SBR development project started with a review of existing administrative data sources. Among the different government authorizes, the CSO SBR selected the City Development Committee (CDCs) and Development Affairs Organization (DAOs) as an

administrative data source to build SBR. City Development Committee (CDCs) and Development Affairs Organization (DAOs) are the best coverage, least bias and most accuracy administrative source for developing SBR.

Cooperation with the owners of administrative data

The CSO SBR organized the workshops to educate the owners of administrative and business license staff about the purpose and use of SBR, the data collection, and how to apply the Myanmar Standard Industrial Classification (MSIC) to classify and code each business unit.

Following the workshops, CSO SBR requested the data from them and works with them to obtain the data in a useable format. This format included business name, owner name, address, business activity description, license fee (tax), phone number, license type, etc. CSO works through its regional offices to engage with other municipal governments and collecting the data from all townships.

The CSO regional offices sent official request letters to each relevant state/ region DAOs to collect the licensed business information along with the excel template to harmonize the collection. Some township DAOs did not provide the data using the excel template provided. Some township DAOs provided hard copies of their own forms, sending them via public transportation. In that case, CSO regional staff have to collect the forms at highway bus terminals and re-typing in excel format and then send it to CSO SBR team from Head Office. CSO SBR team cleans and processes all the data including loading to CSO SBR system.

As of September 2019, the CSO hosted a workshop with Data Providers, Township and State and Region DAOs and CSO Regional staff in Yangon involving 47 people from 23 Township and State and Region DAOs. The DAO officials are the ones responsible for licensing businesses in Myanmar.

The CSO now has the best list of businesses in Myanmar currently available for conducting surveys. In 2020, the CSO managed to collect business license/ registration data from 316 of 330 townships. There were 477,148 units collected.

Maintenance and update of the SBR

A database management system is needed to maintain an SBR. These can be costly to develop and maintaining the data with an ad-hoc solution, such as on Excel spreadsheets, is a

substantial risk which becomes exponentially more difficult as the size of the register and CSO SBR team grows.

Myanmar statistics law allows the CSO to have access to data from reference data of basic registers of public administration in order to update the Statistical Business Register. The CSO SBR collect the business register data from CDCs and DAOs annually and updated the data through CSO regional offices.

Challenges in using administrative data

Administrative data give better coverage of target population. It is also available free of charge. The use of administrative data allows statistics to be produced more frequently, with no extra cost to business. Administrative sources may increase the quality of SBR by providing access to up-to-date information on key characteristics, such as Name and Address, Economic Activity Code, and Size in terms of number of employees and/ or turnover.

A weakness of the CSO SBR is the poor coverage of sizing variables. More than half of records have no value for any sizing variable and the most common is license fee paid, which is the least accurate proxy for measuring business size (compared to number of employees and capital).

All registered businesses pay an annual license fee/ tax, however collecting this data has been challenging. Many of the DAOs were uncomfortable providing this data or don't record the information on a unit record level. It is also known that there are more townships collecting details of the number of employees and that this has not been provided to the CSO. Additional work engaging with the Township DAOs is required to address these issues.

One of the limitations of using administrative data for the CSO SBR is the under coverage of rural areas; and difficult to access more timely data. This is an issue with all available administrative data in Myanmar not just the DAOs township data. A study needs to be undertaken to identify the size and scale of the under coverage. The CSO SBR needs to develop standardized processes and greater expertise in the development of survey frames; especially for users external to the CSO.

A unique number makes the dealings with the public sector simpler, easier and more convenient. However, there is no a Business Number or ID number or any other identifier which is unique in Myanmar. Therefore, the CSO SBR system find it hard to understand the current situation of business units whether they are active firms or inactive firms.

Conclusion

The Statistical Business Register plays a significant role in economic statistics describing economic structure and economic processes. Administrative data have been the key input to the CSO SBR in recent years. The CSO SBR contains the statistically relevant records on business firm list, including the self-employed and institutions. The use of administrative data for the CSO SBR is important to minimize the survey burden and to reduce the cost of other statistical data sources. The CSO SBR will continue to investigate new administrative data sources that might become available to improve the quality of the CSO SBR System and expand its content and uses.

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