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## Striving to benefit SA at high school level

June 22 2011 at 06:13pm

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) publishes various statistical publications on manufacturing, Census, tourism, migration and the consumer price index (CPI). The organisation also publishes different statistical items to inform the public about current developments.

Mbalo Brief is one publication that targets the general public who have no special numerical skills. The first issue was published in June 2008.

To ensure a better understanding of the results and to stimulate readers' analytical skills, this publication is presented in a simple and user-friendly format that includes tables and explanations. In one of its key strategic objectives, Stats SA sets out to expand the statistical information base. In a bid to achieve this objective, Stats SA, through Publication Services, sets out to extend the readers of its monthly statistical publication to public high schools.

The initiative is in line with the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act No. 2 of 2000). Stats SA intends extending the readers of Mbalo Brief to high schools. The initiative is also informed by the Statistics Act, 1999 (Act No. 6 of 1999), which stipulates that the Statistician General must seek to ensure: "...appropriate public awareness of statistical collections and activities"; and that: "...there is co-operation between the producers of official statistics and the users of such and other statistics in the government, other sectors of society and the public at large".

The publication covers current economic issues and the performance of the country based on the main industries and key economic indicators. It presents key findings on information that is sourced from 13 monthly statistical releases collected and produced by Stats SA.

It covers information sourced in subject areas such as wholesale trade sales, motor trade sales, retail trade sales, mining, manufacturing, tourism and migration, tourist accommodation, electricity, statistics of liquidations and insolvencies, CPI and producer price index (PPI), building statistics and civil cases for debt.

As a way of stimulating interest towards statistics, an educational article on each of the areas covered every month will form part of the publication. This is done to link statistics to real life situations.

The objectives of Mbalo Brief are to:

- I Entrench the application of the new vision of partnership with our stake-holders.
- I Enable pupils and educators to use authentic examples from a credible source.
- I Familiarise pupils and educators with the products that Stats SA produces, as well as with the organisation itself.
- I Enable pupils and educators to link what they are taught with real life situations and examples.
- I Supplement the objectives of Maths4Stats and Census@school projects.
- I Present statistics in a simpler and user-friendly manner.
- I Create a culture that takes decisions which are evidence-based.
- I Improve and increase access to official statistics.
- I Create awareness of the functions of Stats SA and its publications.
- I Ensure that every learner has access to the same information.
- I Assist pupils to understand their subject and stimulate analytical skills.

Given that one of our objectives as Stats SA is to stimulate interest towards statistical literacy and to expand our information base, we realise that it is important that we work in partnerships with key stakeholders. In this case, the Department of Basic Education has been very instrumental in the successful implementation of this project. We are grateful for the fact that we share the same vision as the department, because this has enabled us to gain access and be able to distribute Mbalo Brief to all public high schools.

While our objective at Stats SA is to have a country that takes evidence-based decisions, I would say starting at school level will lay a good foundation for the future. This is one way we could be guaranteed of future leaders who will be able to take the country to the next level. To invest in our education systems is a priority for Stats SA. We hope and believe that this publication will help create interest in statistics in an effort to contribute towards the creation of an informed nation and in some way make a difference to our education system.

Pali Lehohla is South Africa's Statistician-General and head of Statistics South Africa.

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