



Notes from the Global Manager

What is ICP?

The International Comparison Program (ICP) is a global statistical initiative involving national, regional and international agencies. It produces internationally comparable price levels, expenditure values, and Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) estimates informing users such as national policy makers, economists, international organizations and academics about the relative purchasing power of citizens of countries. The PPP between two countries is the rate at which the currency of one country needs to be converted into that of a second country to ensure that a given amount of the first country's currency will purchase the same volume of goods and services in the second country as it does in the first. The collection of price data and calculation of PPPs in over 110 countries of the world is coordinated by the ICP Global Office in the World Bank. ICP results combined with the Eurostat-OECD PPP Program will bring the total number of participating countries to about 145, making it the largest international data collection exercise in the world today.

In This Issue

Notes from the Global Manager 1

News in Brief 2

- Executive Board Convenes in Washington
- Regional Coordinators Meet and Review Data
- Technical Advisory Group Members Meet to Discuss Pending Issues
- Global Office Introduces Dikhanov Diagnostics Tables
- A New Method to Estimate Poverty PPP
- Tool Pack's Time-Saving Country Diagnostic Reports

Features 4

- A Global Product List Ready for Ring Comparison
- ICP - Building Statistical Capacity in Developing World

Regional Spotlight 5

- Africa
- Asia and the Pacific
- CIS
- Eurostat/OECD
- Latin America
- Western Asia

Country Spotlight 6

- India's Experience with the ICP
- Vietnam Shares Its Tool Pack Experience
- Bhutan Tests Tool Pack for CPI

Global Office: Work in Progress 7

Calendar of Events 8

Dear Readers,

I am pleased to be able to tell you about a significant milestone achieved during the recent Regional Coordinators meeting in Washington D.C. The Global Office and Regional Coordinators were able to review the 2005 round's first price data collection results. Together we reviewed average prices by item by country by region, number of observations, and variance coefficients for consumption items. For the first time Regional Coordinators were able to compare results, identify areas where improvements were needed and determine necessary steps to ensure results across regions would be comparable.

This exercise also raised questions about data access. A fundamental principle of the ICP is that a country cannot compute a Purchasing Power Parity by itself because the process is based on a comparison of prices across countries. Nor can a region compute Purchasing Power Parities between its countries and the rest of the world by itself. That is why it is so important for countries to submit average prices to the Regional Coordinator and the Global Office.

Having spent most of my life in a National Statistics Office, I am acutely aware of concerns about data confidentiality. I am pleased to report that World Bank policies regarding data confidentiality are consistent with those followed by national and international statistical institutions. While all agree on the need to maintain confidentiality, the greater challenge is to provide researchers with access to our rich databases on a limited and restricted basis to expand the boundaries of knowledge and understanding and to improve the statistical process for future rounds. The Global Office is forming a Data Access Working Group to address these issues.

There have been other significant accomplishments too. After nearly a year of intensive work involving the Ring countries, Regional Coordinators and the Global Office, a list of about 950 consumption items has been prepared for the Ring Comparison. The Ring product list that will be the basis to link the six regions of the world is now complete and a catalog prepared.

The Technical Advisory Group and the ICP Executive Board met recently providing essential guidance and decisions; more than can be summarized in this note. Please take a look at the ICP website which has recently been updated with more information about these two events.

Finally, this edition contains country reports from India, Vietnam and Bhutan. India shares its program implementation experiences and the uses of ICP for national capacity building. Bhutan's and Vietnam's reports focus on their experiences with the ICP Tool Pack. I would like to encourage other participating countries to share their experiences.

In closing, I want to acknowledge the efforts and dedication of the national statistical offices and the price collectors. In the past few months, I have gone into markets with price collectors in Thailand, China, and Mali. In every case, I found them to be very knowledgeable about the items being priced and dedicated to providing complete and accurate data. Their commitment and sincerity will no doubt contribute to the success of the current round.

Regards
Fred Vogel

News in Brief

Executive Board Convenes in Washington

The Executive Board met on October 26 to review the work progress and discuss the work plan for the balance of the program. Board members recognized the accomplishments achieved thus far and noted the challenges ahead. Key policy issues were discussed. Important guidance and directions emerged from the meeting's deliberations. For instance, the Board endorsed a set of basic requirements presented by the Global Office that countries must meet to be included in the final PPP calculations in the 2005 ICP.

Issues related to data confidentiality and data access by the general public and by the research community were discussed rather extensively. As a result, the Global Office was instructed to form a Data Access Working Group to prepare recommendations for the Board's review and approval. The Board also discussed and approved the plan to publish PPPs in stages beginning with total household consumption followed by the full GDP. Other issues discussed included the location of the Global database and the future of the ICP. *Minutes of the Board meeting are available on the ICP website.*

Regional Coordinators Meet and Review Data

ICP Regional Coordinators from Asia Pacific, Africa, the Commonwealth of Independent Countries, Eurostat/OECD, Latin America and Western Asia met with the ICP Global Office from September 13-16 in Washington D.C. for their half-yearly meeting. The objective was to exchange information about the status of data collection in each region, update work plans and review data compiled in price surveys in the first and second quarters of the year.

An important output of the meeting was the terms and conditions necessary for countries to participate fully in ICP. These are the basic principles on which the success of the program depends. Summing up the necessity for these principles, the Global Manager, Fred Vogel, said, "The ICP cannot produce a satisfactory outcome unless all countries and regions that take part in it adhere to the same methodology and procedures. Adherence to these principles will not only help us avoid the shortcomings of previous rounds but also serve as the cornerstone in ICP's efforts to foster a spirit of trust and transparency among stakeholders."

The Regional Coordinators meeting also gave participants the opportunity to review data quality in four regions. Problems found during this as well as other data review sessions were discussed extensively by participants. It was agreed that survey guidelines regarding units of measure need to be updated. Products with loose specifications in each region have to be reviewed. Countries need to provide at least 15 price observations for each product. Larger countries with more diversified economies will need to price more than 15 to capture their market realities.

Another important issue dealt with in the meeting concerned data confidentiality. It was decided that the Global Office will function as an official statistical office guaranteeing strict confidentiality and integrity of all data placed in its custody.

A summary of the regional status reports presented by Regional Coordinators in the meeting is provided in the Regional Spotlight section of this newsletter. Other issues discussed include Housing, Equipment and Construction goods comparison, ICP Tool Pack, Ring Comparison, etc. *All meeting related documentation, including the minutes, is available on the 'Meetings and Workshops' page on the ICP website.*

TAG Members Meet to Discuss Pending Issues

ICP Technical Advisory Group (TAG) members met in Washington D.C. on 11-14 October to discuss pending methodological and technical issues related to ICP and its data. The meeting was opened by Shaida Badiee, Director DECDG, World Bank, who informed the participants of the growing interest in ICP results within the World Bank.

The TAG discussed Construction, Equipment goods and Housing services survey procedures and data collection practices. On the question of fixity, TAG members reinforced the idea that when linking the regional comparisons to world-results, regional fixity for PPP and volume indexes at all levels of aggregation should be preserved. Members discussed a number of aggregation methods, including the EKS and GK methods that have been used widely in the past. After extensive discussions TAG recommended the use of EKS as the aggregation method in each ICP region. Meanwhile acknowledging the importance of additive index, members recommended to commission a paper to look into an alternative additive index aggregation method that can be used as an additional option. *Minutes of the TAG meeting are available on the ICP website.*

Global Office Introduces Dikhanov Diagnostic Tables

The ICP Global Office has introduced a new set of diagnostic tables that complement the Quaranta Tables in the Tool Pack and facilitate data validation. The Dikhanov Tables, so called after its creator Yuri Dikhanov of the Global Office, are based on the analysis of residuals from the fit of the regression of logarithms of item prices using the CPD method. The advantages of the new diagnostic tables include presentation in a compressed form.

The regional diagnostics reports, for example, would consist of 20 pages of analysis for a region such as Asia compared to 200 to 300 pages of the Quaranta tables. Its diagnostics can also be run at different levels, Basic Heading and/or at higher level aggregates (e.g. Food, Consumption or even GDP). The tables are displayed as a matrix of relative item prices and contain important information for price analysis. The creation of the new diagnostic tables is part of Global Office's efforts to introduce new methodologies and techniques to improve the quality of data in the program. The new diagnostic tables were endorsed as a complement to Quaranta Tables by the Technical Advisory Group during its October meeting. The Dikhanov Tables have already been used as primary diagnostic tools to validate third quarter data in ICP Latin America. The tables are being integrated into the Tool Pack.

A New Method to Estimate Poverty PPP

One of the main objectives of the current ICP round is computing poverty-specific PPPs to support efforts towards measuring poverty incidences and monitoring progress toward meeting the Millennium Development Goals. The initiative focuses on two fronts: (a) developing a methodology to estimate poverty PPPs and (b) establishing correspondence between the detailed expenditure estimates from household surveys and the standard 90 plus consumption classifications of the ICP. The aim is to calculate poverty PPPs utilizing detailed price data from the ICP database in conjunction with the corresponding expenditure weights from household survey sources. This project is managed and funded separately without adding any burden to the regular ICP initiative.

A Poverty Advisory Group (PAG) has been formed to help guide this effort. The PAG consists of eminent scholars and poverty experts, including Professors Angus Deaton (Princeton University), Erwin Diewert (University of British Columbia), Alan Heston (University of Pennsylvania) and Prasada Rao (University of Queensland). The Group is working in close consultation with World Bank poverty experts to better coordinate the Bank's efforts in poverty measurement and monitoring with the effort to improve poverty PPP estimates. The efforts on this front have shifted from research to implementation phase.

Tool Pack's Time-Saving Country Diagnostic Reports

Diagnostic reports play a very important part in ensuring optimum data quality in ICP. The reports are used by the Regional Coordinator to prepare country-specific reports highlighting data quality problems that need to be checked by National Coordinators. This is an extension of the use of the Quaranta table in the Data Processing Module (DPM) of the Tool Pack. The Quaranta table allows the Regional Coordinator (RC) to compare country price data in a variety of metrics, such as PPPs at Basic Heading (BH) level, Variation Coefficients at the item and BH levels, Exchange Rate ratios of price (XR-ratio) and Country Unit Price Ratios (CUP-ratio). It highlights the data that fall outside certain threshold limits set by the Regional Coordinators for their region, allowing them to identify the countries, Basic Headings and specific items that appear problematic.

The whole process of identifying and diagnosing problems at the country level can be cumbersome and time consuming. To mitigate this problem the Global Office has designed a new Country Diagnostic Report (CDR) that is automatically generated by the regional Data Processing Module (DPM) of the Tool Pack. It is expected to reduce the time taken to prepare and send data back to the National Coordinator for further verification. For example, in a region like Asia that has 23 countries participating in the ICP, manually preparing a report similar in content to the CDR may take two to three weeks. The automated process will greatly reduce the time, and also provide more specific guidance to the national coordinator about the data to be verified.

The newly designed report is in Excel format and can be run for one or more countries and for one or more basic headings at a time. The report includes one section with basic summary information from the regional Quaranta Table, for example the number of items in the BH, the period of price data used (specific quarter or month or year), imputation method, base country, PPP for BH, PLI%, etc. The country specific section includes the products under the BH, average price (in national currency), measure for that price (UoM and quantity), number of quotations, variation coefficient, XR-ratio and CUP-ratio. Metrics falling outside the threshold limits set by the Regional Coordinator for variation coefficients or for the PLI% etc. are flagged in the CDR in color and with a "?" symbol. The main purpose of this table is to show each country's diagnostics coming from the Quaranta table without showing the same information for the other countries to preserve country level data confidentiality.

For countries that provide individual price observations to the Regional Coordinating Office, the CDR has a special feature which displays the individual prices that contribute to a variation coefficient that are outside the thresholds set by the RC for that BH. These prices are displayed at the bottom of the report and can be viewed by clicking the item code. The CDR report has a "legend" at the bottom that explains the criteria used for flagging problems in the report. All the selected BHs for a country are put in an Excel workbook on different sheets. The Regional Coordinator is expected to review these country Excel workbooks (files) and send them to the National Coordinators as an attachment in an Email.

"... the ICP price collection survey will afford estimation of average national prices of more than 700 items in India for the first time. These averages can be computed at the state level for major states. India is a large country not only in terms of population and area, but also in terms of diversity - socio-economic, cultural, consumption behavior, religion, etc. ICP data, subject to technical feasibility, can also be utilized in the country to study inter-regional price differentials in real terms."

Vishnu Kumar,
Deputy Director General,
Ministry of Statistics and
Program Implementation, India

Features

A Global Product List Ready for Ring Comparison

The ICP Global Office has just published a catalog of the much-awaited Ring Product List. This is a list of products that will be priced by a selection of countries in each of the program's 6 regions to link its regional results to estimate global Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs). The most challenging task for the ICP in the preparation of this list of goods and services was to balance the two very basic, and yet most important, criteria: 'comparability' and 'representativity'.

Meeting these two often conflicting criteria is even more difficult when the participating countries are very diverse in terms of economic development, consumption and production patterns as seen in the ring countries. Whereas common product quality identifiers such as high/medium/low brand stratum can be very useful in building a list in a region as homogenous as the OECD, its use is limited in ICP's divergent geographical coverage. Even if the same brand name is available in abundance in all regions, what is considered to be a high-end brand in a developing country is often a low or at best medium range brand in a developed country/region. Similarly, price determining characteristics differ widely in different regions.

4

A global list of specifications drawn from regional specification overlaps is of course ideal for linking purposes. This ensures that a sufficient number of countries in each region can price the same product and provide the necessary overlap. The Global Office's experience, however, shows that drawing a global core list from existing regional specifications is a difficult undertaking. Regional product lists are developed independently through regional meetings of experts familiar with their respective regions, without much concern for specifications used in other regions. Regional specifications also differ due to differences in level of economic development and consumption patterns. Not only is it common to see totally different products in each list, but even similar products are described differently and different coding systems are used. Furthermore, we found that specifications were very detailed in some regions and loosely defined in others. This meant that the ring list had to be developed from the ground up.

Due to all these and many more challenges the global ring list could not have been developed without close consultation with regional and country experts. We started with a diverse list of 6,500 regional items and ended with 950, most of which can be priced in all the ring countries. Harmonizing the terminology defining the products proved to be another major challenge. Finally, all products within a basic heading were described in a consistent manner, corresponding images were sourced and a catalogue published. The end result is a global basket of goods and services that can act as the core product list for future international comparisons.

This summary was taken from the paper "Building List of Specifications for the Ring Comparison" by Yonas Biru. The full paper is available on the ICP website under 'Publications'.

ICP - Building Statistical Capacity in Developing World

The ICP is one of the most comprehensive and complex international statistical undertakings involved in the development and harmonization of methodologies and concepts for price data collection, validation, and estimation. Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs) generated by the program are based upon actual price data collected for more than 1000 items on a periodic basis in participating countries.

Methodologies developed in ICP 2003-2006 will enable more accurate assessments of the relative poverty levels across countries and for changes to be monitored over time. The training provided for the ICP is helping to build statistical capacity in individual countries. An important contribution to price and other economic statistics is the review of national accounts in participating countries to be compliant with the SNA93 under the ICP umbrella.

One of the most important innovations in this round of the ICP is the introduction of the Structured Product Description (SPD) approach to build regional as well as global list of specifications of goods and products. The complexity of ICP operations is compounded by the international nature of the program in that the optimum set of products for the international comparison may not be those a country would select for its own Consumer Price Surveys. The SPD approach introduced a coding structure that can consistently define products anywhere in the world. Several countries, including some with well developed statistical systems, have indicated their desire to use the SPD approach in the design of their own consumer price data collection systems.

Another improvement is in the area of construction surveys. The Basket of Construction Components (BOCC) is introduced in this round by the ICP for construction projects comparisons. It measures relative prices at the level of the construction component. The construction component can be thought of as an aggregation of several construction work items, including the material put in place, labor and equipment, and any consumables required. The price comparisons are performed using 3 baskets - residential, non-residential, and civil works.

Several software packages were prepared in this round to manage the preparation of SPDs and enable the harmonization of six regional product lists into one global ring list. One of the most widely used systems however, is the ICP Tool Pack. The system stores data in a consistent fashion, subjects data across countries and regions to the same validation checks, and computes PPPs at the Basic Heading level and at different levels of aggregation.

These and other new developments in methodology in the 2003-2006 round of the program leave a legacy not just for future rounds of the ICP but also for statistical capacity building in participating countries.

This is a summary of the paper "Legacies of the 2005 International Comparison Program" prepared jointly by Dennis Trewin, and Fred Vogel. The full paper is available on the ICP website under 'Publications'.

ICP Asia-Pacific

Twenty-three countries in the region are participating in ICP. All of them started price collection surveys by April 2005. Some started during the second quarter. By July, 22 countries had surveyed the full consumption basket. Twenty-one countries computed average prices for the first quarter. Seventeen countries will submit prices with a rural/urban dimension. Data review workshops have been held in the region. Nineteen countries have submitted GDP weights ranging from 2002-2004. All but one country will be participating at the full GDP level. All countries in the region are using the ToolPack.

ICP Africa

Fifty-one countries are participating in ICP. Forty-three of them have conducted pilot surveys so far and all 41 have met the requirements for full participation in the ICP. Regional workshops were held to train country staff on data quality. Two rounds of data review workshops have been completed. The region plans to calculate annual national average prices and compute PPPs for the reference years 2005 and 2006, using monthly data collected from July 2005 to June 2006. The ToolPack is not being used in Africa at the country level, but its Data Processing Module is used by the African Development Bank (AfDB) to generate Quaranta tables. For the processing of price surveys, AfDB is using its own software called SEMPER.

CIS

Eleven countries are participating in ICP. Uzbekistan has dropped out of the program. Price surveys for ICP 2005 began in the CIS region in January 2005. In Georgia, Moldova and Turkmenistan started price surveys in March 2005. In 3 CIS countries (Azerbaijan, Russia and Ukraine) prices are being collected in capital cities only. In the other CIS countries prices are being collected both in capital cities and large regions. All CIS countries take own consumption in account in the preparation of average prices. The region has reviewed 2004 data, but has not yet held a data review workshop for 2005. Data collection for investment goods is also underway.

Eleven countries are participating in ICP. Uzbekistan has dropped out of the program. Price collection began in mid-2004 and will continue through 2005. Data collection for investment goods is also underway. The region has reviewed 2004 data, but has not held a data review workshop for 2005. Prices are being collected in capital cities only in 4 countries. All CIS countries take own consumption in account in the preparation of average prices. The region is using the Eurostat system instead of the Tool Pack.

Eurostat/OECD

The region conducts its own comparison program independent from the ICP and there are 43 countries in their jurisdiction. Currently the second consumer price survey of 2005 is underway and will be finished in December. All other surveys necessary for the reference year 2005 are finalized. The region is a full participant in the ICP Ring comparison. The Ring countries under the coordination of the Office of National Statistics (ONS), UK have conducted pre surveys of the draft Ring list.

Latin America

Ten countries are participating in ICP. All of them have been collecting data since the first quarter of 2005 and will be preparing PPPs at the full GDP level. The coverage is urban in all countries. Data collection occurs during a 4-6 week period each quarter. The region has been conducting quarterly data review workshops on a regular basis. The Tool Pack is being used in one country and in the regional coordinating office (Statistics Canada).

West Asia

Eleven countries are participating in ICP. Data collection took place during the first quarter in 9 countries with 2 more beginning in the second quarter. United Arab Emirates has dropped out of the comparison. The region expects to continue data collection into 2006. All participating countries have submitted data to the regional office for review. One data review workshop has been held and a second one has been scheduled for December to review second quarter data. The region is using the Tool Pack in full.

Country Spotlight

India's experience with the current round

Vishnu Kumar, Deputy Director General



India has been participating in the ICP since its inception and brings to it a wealth of experience in conducting domestic price surveys. To ensure the reliability of the data generated from the program, an "Expert Committee on ICP" was formed to advise the Government on all relevant aspects of the program. The Expert Committee consists of eminent academicians and representatives from the Government.

India is integrating ICP and CPI activities, thanks to a robust CPI system. The 31 urban centers and 201 villages selected for the ICP survey are the same as those covered in the country's CPI. Field work for ICP price surveys have been assigned to price collectors already engaged in CPI price collection. Price data for ICP are being collected at the same time as CPI.

Before actual price collection for the ICP, India conducted a pilot survey to identify ICP-specific products and prepare lists of outlets/markets from which price data could be collected. This helped the country identify products that were not available in outlets covered in the CPI and to make contingency plans. Most items are being priced once a quarter, although price data for fruits and vegetables are being collected every month or season to account for seasonality. In rural areas, data is collected weekly from a sample of 50 villages that were selected using systematic random sampling.

India is making full use of the ICP Tool Pack software. The country actively participated in testing the software and contributed towards its improvement by offering valuable suggestions at different points in time. Although very comprehensive, the software would serve country offices better if it were more user-friendly. In particular, there is a need to make the software window-based to enhance its utility.

In conclusion, the ICP price collection survey will afford estimation of average national prices of more than 700 items in India for the first time. These averages can be computed at the state level for major states. India is a large country not only in terms of population and area, but also in terms of diversity - socio-economic, cultural, consumption behavior, religion, etc. ICP data, subject to technical feasibility, can also be utilized in the country to study inter-regional price differentials in real terms.

This is an excerpt from India's country report. The full report can be accessed from the ICP Website.

Vietnam Shares Its Tool Pack Experience

Phan Xuan Cam, Senior Price Statistician



The ICP surveys in Vietnam are conducted in 20 provinces and 64 cities, covering a total of 70 price collection centers. Vietnam is using all the three modules of the Tool Pack. The latest version of the Tool Pack is relatively easy to install and has the capacity to process and transfer large quantities of data between data

collection centers and National Statistical Offices (NSO) on the one hand, and between NSOs and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the regional coordinator for the ICP-Asia and Pacific, on the other hand.

PAM is installed on six computers at the GSO, while PCM is installed on 20 computers at the province/city offices where data entry is undertaken. The survey frame including geographic stratification by provinces and cities, as well as sampling designs identifying data collection centers and outlets, were set up using the PAM. In addition, PAM was utilized to map products to outlets and to assign products to data collectors.

An advantage of the Tool Pack is that it helps to standardize price collection procedures. The data verification facility in PAM allows data validation not only at the national level, but also at the level of cities and provinces. Although the Tool Pack also supports CPI, Vietnam does not intend to use it. It will use CPI software that is developed in Vietnamese. However, the plan is to use the Tool Pack for calculating regional PPPs (regional price indexes) within Vietnam, with the objective of analyzing differences in living standards and poverty incidences.

A major disadvantage from the Vietnamese point of view is that the system requires high-level hardware configuration. Another restriction is that the Tool Pack does not support Vietnamese characters.

This is an excerpt from ac Vietnam's country report. The full report can be accessed from the ICP Website.

Bhutan Tests Tool Pack for CPI

Tshering Dorji, National ICP Coordinator



The National Statistical Bureau of Bhutan is the national ICP implementing agency. The Bureau is using the complete ICP Tool Pack system, including PAM, PCM and DPM. Bhutan has installed PCM during the last quarter of 2004 in some districts. The PCM has been installed in all the 20 districts where prices have been collected since the first quarter of 2005. The PAM is installed only in the head office where the National ICP Coordinator resides.

Bhutan is currently testing the Tool Pack for its national CPI program. The Statistical Bureau has uploaded the CPI item list to the PAM. CPI products have been mapped to outlets and price collectors in the PAM, and the various surveys have been imported to PCM. PCM software for the CPI has not been installed in the districts. However, once the current testing is complete, Bhutan plans to install PCM for CPI in all the 20 districts, beginning in the first quarter of 2006, for further testing.

This is an excerpt from Bhutan's country report. The full report can be accessed from the ICP Website.

Global Office: Work in Progress

Ring Product List

The ring product list for the global comparison has been finalized after intense discussions with Regional Coordinators and ring country representatives. An electronic version of the list was disseminated to regional coordinating offices in the first week of November. A catalogue in hard copy containing detailed specifications and color photographs has been published in English and is ready to be sent to regional offices. Data collection forms have also been prepared and will be sent to regional offices shortly. A paper has been written explaining the details of the ring comparison and the methods used to build the ring list. It will be included in the ICP handbook and posted on the ICP website.

Health sector comparison

The Health product list for the global Ring Comparison was finalized and sent to the Regional Coordinators on October 28. Guidelines clarifying complexities in the specifications and Tool Pack unloadable files will follow. The list includes pharmaceutical products, other medical products, therapeutic appliances and equipment, medical services, dental services and paramedical services. The preliminary list was prepared with the help of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the CIS region and first disseminated to regional offices in March. Asia and West Asia regions based their respective regional health product lists on the preliminary list circulated by the Global Office. Comments from Asia and Africa to improve the specifications were incorporated in the final Ring list.

Construction sector comparison

The Global Office is in the process of preparing electronic data collection forms for the Construction sector. These forms will help standardize data collection and data entry for construction surveys in the country offices, and later on facilitate the work of the Regional Coordinators in validating and analyzing the data. The forms will be sent to the regional coordinating offices and country offices by mid November 2005.

Equipment sector comparison

The Global Office is finalizing a core international list of Equipment goods for the global Ring Comparison. This list has been designed to minimize extra data collection work by the ring countries. Each SPD/PS form highlights mandatory characteristics and contains baseline product descriptions.

Where possible, model references from global manufacturers have been included to help identify the products more easily. The Global Office is also helping in the training of the Asia Pacific region for the Equipment Survey. To this end, a workshop on equipment surveys will be held at the Asian Development Bank headquarters in Manila in December. Earlier, Equipment expert Steven Burdette also reviewed samples of Asian PSs on behalf of the Global Office.

Price collection for Equipment goods are scheduled for 2006. Data collection forms for the survey are now being designed at the Global Office.

ICP website

The website has been overhauled and given a new look to make it more user-friendly and easy to navigate. Minutes and other details of recently held meetings (including Executive Board, Regional Coordinators and Technical Advisory Group meetings) are now available on the website via the 'Meetings and Workshops' tab on the left menu bar. Details about a new automated process for generating Country Diagnostic Reports in the Tool Pack's Data Processing Module can be accessed from the page dedicated to ICP software under '2005 Round'. The participating countries list has also been updated and reflects the situation as of October this year.

Tool Pack

The Arabic version of the Tool Pack is being used by all countries in Western Asia. Sixteen countries in the Asia-Pacific region are using the Tool Pack, while another six countries are using their own systems for data collection, but upload their data to the PAM and DPM for data validation, data processing and data transfer to the Asian Development Bank. Since the ICP in Latin America is a part of each country's CPI with systems adequate to produce micro-data with the required detail, most countries opted to use their own systems for data collection. Only Uruguay uses the complete Spanish Tool Pack. Regional coordinators in Africa and Latin America use the Tool Pack for regional data validation and analysis. While the full Tool Pack system is being fully supported, the Global office is moving portions of the system to a Windows platform.

Calendar of Events

Event	Western Asia 5th regional workshop
Date	December 17-21, 2005
Venue	To be announced
Participants	11 member countries of ICP Western Asia, including the National Coordinator, a National Accountant and the person responsible for ICP Tool Pack in each country
Host	ESCWA
Contact person	Farah Nsouly nsouly@un.org

Event	Africa sub-regional workshop on quality control and data validation
Date	14-18 November 2005
Venue	Kampala, Uganda
Participants	200 statisticians representing 51 countries
Host	African Development Bank
Contact person	Michel mouyelo-katoula m.mouyelo-katoula@afdb.org

Event	ICP - Asia and the Pacific workshops
Date	November 21-22: Poverty PPP Workshop November 23-26: Regional data validation November 28-30: Construction Workshop December 1-3: Equipment Workshop
Venue	Asian Development Bank, Manila
Participants	23 participating countries, including National Coordinators, construction experts, and equipment experts.
Host	Asian Development Bank
Contact person	Vaskar Saha vsaha@adb.org

Event	Meeting of CIS national statistical service experts on diagnostic tables for 2004 investment goods and review of activities associated with 2005 comparison
Date	21 –25 November 2005
Venue	Sergiev Posad, Moscow Region
Participants	All CIS countries, excluding Uzbekistan, and coordinators
Host	Rosstat, CIS Stat committee
Contact person	Vasily Kouznetsov kouznetsov@gks.ru; Ludmila Antsiferova Antsiferova@cisstat.com

How to reach us:

For more details about the International Comparison Program please visit our website

<http://www.worldbank.org/DATA/ICP>

or contact

Fred Vogel, Global Manager fvogel@worldbank.org

Yonas Biru, Deputy Global Manager, ybiru@worldbank.org

International Comparison Program (ICP)

The World Bank

1818 H Street NW, MC2-209

Washington D.C. 20433

USA

Email: ICP@worldbank.org