**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**

**DEPARTMENT OF DATA SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC POLICY**

**MSC DATA MANAGEMENT**

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**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND LEGAL STUDIES**

**SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS**

**DEPARTMENT OF DATA SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC POLICY**



**Course Code: DMA 820S**

**Course Name: DATA CURATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

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**Index Number: SE/DMD/24/0019**

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**COMMENTARY ON THE DATA POLICY OF THE GHANA STATISTICAL SERVICE**

The Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) as the primary organization in charge of creating and managing official statistics in Ghana, has created a strong framework for data policy that covers topics such as, the structure of data dissemination, formats of data release, data sharing protocols, and data visibility (Ghana Statistical Service, n.d). These components guarantee that a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including governmental organizations, researchers, development partners, and the general public, may access, trust, and use statistics (Rowley, 2011). The write-up is centered on these four topics and how these areas can be improved.

* Structure of Data Dissemination

The Structure of Data Dissemination at GSS is classified, centralized, and purposefully coordinated. Data is gathered through censuses, surveys, and administrative records and is subsequently, processed, analyzed and validated through technical directorates before being disseminated (Ghana Statistical Service, n.d). Dissemination is conducted through official reports, statistical bulletins, digital platforms such as StatsBank, GIS visualization, mobile apps, and APIs. Social media and the GSS website are used for rapid updates, and stakeholder engagement sessions (Fissi et al, 2022). The procedure ensures transparency, standardization, and wide access to national and subnational data.

Dissemination follows pre-announced schedules and includes public briefings for major releases such as the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey, Population and Housing Census (PHC), Integrated Business Establishment Survey and Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) (Agyekum, 2024). All disseminated data must meet quality standards such as accuracy, relevance, and consistency. Metadata accompanies published data, and any revisions must follow a documented policy.

* Format of Data Dissemination

GSS implements a range of formats to ensure data usability for different audiences. These include, graphical formats such as charts and infographics, tabular presentations in Excel and PDF and raw microdata files in formats like CSV, STATA (.dta), and SPSS (.sav). Interactive dashboards, GIS-based maps, and APIs enhance real-time accessibility and integration into external systems. Printed summary reports and data briefs are used for grassroots and non-technical users. Each data release is accompanied by metadata and documentation to aid interpretation and application.

* Data Sharing Protocols and Procedures

GSS data sharing protocols are governed by the Statistical Service Act, 2019 (Act 1003), which protects confidentiality and ensures responsible use. Data is categorized into Licensed Use Files (LUFs), and Restricted Use Files (RUFs), Public Use Files (PUFs), each with specific access requirements. Requests for microdata require formal applications and signed Data Sharing Agreements (DSAs), reviewed by the Data Access and Release Committee. All users must commit to ethical data use, proper citation, and non-disclosure of confidential information. GSS may withdraw access if terms are breached.

* Data Visibility

GSS uses centralized platforms, such as StatsBank Ghana and the official website for publishing key indicators and datasets, to increase visibility. Publications, media appearances, infographics on social media, and regional distribution efforts guarantee that data reaches a wider audience. Accessibility and interpretation are enhanced by infographics, mobile-responsive dashboards, and summary fact sheets. Additionally, GSS promotes data literacy through partnerships with academia and civil society, training, and capacity building. To guarantee relevance and ongoing visibility improvement, regular updates and feedback systems are used.

To sum up, the GSS data policy provides a thorough method for sharing, formatting, promoting, and disseminating data. Through stakeholder engagement, contemporary tools, and legal support, GSS guarantees that the data generated is not only of the highest caliber but also accessible, usable, and secure. As Ghana continues its data modernization journey, further investments in digital platforms and open data infrastructure will deepen the impact and utility of national statistics.

Again, the following are some suggested ways to improve the mentioned areas above;

* Structure of Data Dissemination

Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) can concentrate on increasing user engagement, timeliness, and accessibility to improve data dissemination. This entails utilizing digital channels, implementing data science methodologies, and cultivating cooperation with interested parties. To increase user data literacy, GSS can specifically create user-friendly data portals, publish more timely and detailed data, and work on capacity building among users.

* Format of Data Dissemination

GSS can invest more in a strong and intuitive web portal that offers quick access to a range of datasets, including downloadable formats such as Excel and CSV, and APIs for automated data retrieval.

* Data Sharing Protocols and Procedures

The Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) can concentrate on creating explicit guidelines for data sharing, making use of technology to facilitate effective data access and analysis, encouraging teamwork, and guaranteeing the security and quality of data.

* Data Visibility

The Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) can put strategies centered on better data access, utilization, and sharing into practice to increase data visibility. This entails putting data security first, encouraging teamwork, and utilizing data science. GSS can guarantee more timely, dependable, and perceptive statistical outputs by implementing these strategies.

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