PROJECT IDENTIFICATION AND FEASIBILITY FOR A REGIONALLY COORDINATED APPROACH FOR THE CONDUCT OF THE LITERACY ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING PROGRAMME (LAMP) IN THE CARICOM REGION

1. INTRODUCTION

The Meeting would recall that at the Thirty-First Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) which was held in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad in 2006, a presentation was made by Statistics Canada on the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP) methodology and usefulness in obtaining accurate data on Literacy. In addition, the representative of Bermuda also presented the experience of that country relative to the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey in 2003, highlighting the costs versus the benefits of the exercise.

The Fifteenth Meeting of the Council of Human and Social Development (COHSOD) of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) received a presentation from the Statistics Sub-Programme of the CARICOM Secretariat in respect of Strengthening Capacity for the Development of Core Social/Gender Statistics. Included in this presentation was a proposal to enable a regionally-coordinated approach to the executing of the LAMP methodology in the Region to produce more reliable statistics on literacy.
This proposal originated from the Seventh Meeting of the CARICOM Advisory Group on Strengthening Capacity in the Compilation of Social/Gender and Environment Statistics, a precursor to the current Advisory Group on Statistics that has now been established to guide the improvement in the range and quality of statistics and statistical infrastructure in the Region. This Meeting was held in Jamaica in 2005. The Advisory Group expressed concerns about the unreliable and inaccurate measurement of Literacy in the Region and recommended that the CARICOM Secretariat should take steps to communicate with the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as well as the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) to enable an approach to improving the measurement of literacy.

There is increasing recognition of the importance of literacy data and of the use of this information in the formulation of policy. The significance given to literacy has led to the adoption by all countries of the Education For All (EFA) goals. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) use the literacy indicator data to measure the achievement of the following goals: (i) the achievement of universal primary education; and (ii) the promotion of gender equality. It is also argued that improved literacy is highly correlated with poverty reduction. Theory implies that human capital development, what people know and can apply to improving their welfare is an important determinant of long term rates of economic growth and social development.

The LAMP would enable the production of reliable data on literacy levels across all Member States of the Community that can better inform decision-makers as to the interventions and requirements needed to improve literacy which can then positively impact social and economic conditions in the Region. A regional Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme would be a cost-effective strategy to the measurement of Literacy in the Region, as well as leading to greater comparability of the data across countries.
2. Justification for Accurate Measurement of Literacy

The commitment of the Caribbean Community to improving literacy and the accurate measurement of literacy are underscored by the following mandates and actions:

(i) Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas which speaks to adoption of measures to develop the Community’s human resources in its thrust towards international competitiveness in the development, production and delivery of goods and services.

(ii) Education For All which proposes, *inter alia*, the ensuring of the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes and the achievement of a 100% functionally literate population;

- The statement of the Fifteenth Meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) of the intention of the CARICOM Secretariat to explore all possibilities in conducting a regional Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme to facilitate reliable estimates for decision-making;

- The signing on to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2000 which are contingent upon or incorporate achievement of high levels of Literacy;

- The recommendation by the Thirty-First Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, November 2006 of the exploration of a regional strategy to assist Member States in conducting the LAMP. The former CARICOM Programme Advisory Group in the area of Social/Gender and Environmental Statistics in its deliberation on the issue of literacy had stated that the use of indicators derived from the Census data...
not to be the basis for measuring Literacy and called for the implementation of a reliable methodology in the Region.

It is anticipated that given the unreliability of the data on Literacy that Member States would be committed to this project.

3. Advancement of the LAMP Activity in the Region

In October 2008, a submission was made to the International Development Bank, Regional Public Good (RPG) facility to advance the process through enabling the development of a framework that can be used by countries wishing to undertake surveys based on the LAMP methodology. The Regional Public Good would be the knowledge acquisition for the conduct of literacy surveys in the Region that can lead to more accurate and reliable indicators and information on literacy. It is assumed that once the RPG is developed and possibly after the forthcoming Census exercise that countries would be in a position to make use of the RPG in obtaining more reliable measures of Literacy. Members of the Advisory Group on Statistics were asked to provide letters of commitment which were required for submission with the Proposal.

ACTION REQUIRED:

The Meeting is invited to:

- consider the developments in relation to the efforts to obtain more reliable measurement of Literacy.

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