



Stats News & Views

Facts, Figures and Updates from the Statistics Section of the Caribbean Community Secretariat

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Main Events

CARICOM Social/Gender Statistics Programme – Strengthening Capacity in Member States

The CARICOM Programme “**Strengthening Capacity in the Compilation of Social/Gender and Environment Statistics and Indicators in the CARICOM Region**” was officially launched in St. Kitts and Nevis on April 1, 2003. This signalled the start of a series of one-day meetings which are being conducted in all Member States to assist in establishing Social Indicators and Millennium Development Goals (SIMDG) committees. These committees will be responsible for compiling and disseminating the core set of social and gender statistics and indicators, identified by the CARICOM Advisory Group comprising heads of statistics departments and representatives from the CARICOM Secretariat and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).

The establishment of SIMDG committees in Member States will enhance the image and usefulness of statistics and indicators as an indispensable tool for policy and managerial decisions, and will assist in the preparation of the MDGs. Unlike economic statistics, social statistics are produced by the National Statistical Offices (NSOs) as well as several other agencies. Strengthening of the capacity of these agencies will ensure that there are effective mechanisms in place to improve the quality and sustain the production of social statistics. Users and producers of statistical information are being invited to these meetings. The agenda includes a discussion of the Terms of Reference of the committees, MDGs and the indicators to be compiled.

The CARICOM Programme will also enhance capacity through the hosting of Regional workshops for Member States on specialised topics in the social sector. These workshops, exchange visits and study tours that can facilitate ‘horizontal’ transfer of technical assistance within the Region, will be arranged through the Programme. Efforts will be made to obtain direct technical assistance for countries in need. This assistance may include advisory visits by the Secretariat or consultants in areas such as data collection, compilation and analysis.

Perhaps the most visible output of the Programme will be the actual set of core indicators that will be compiled and submitted to the Secretariat by all Member States. Formats for the preparation of these indicators have been prepared and are to be dispatched to Member States with a deadline date of submission to the Secretariat of November 2003. The Secretariat is also encouraging Member States, through their SIMDG committees, to prepare national publications, with analysis, to complement the Regional publications. This will promote the use of statistics.

A major concern is the sustainability of the Programme. At the time of the preparation of this article, committees have already been established in St. Kitts and Nevis, Antigua and Barbuda and Montserrat. The attendance at the meetings and the active participation in the discussions were extremely encouraging. However, the programme will only be sustainable and successful if cooperation and collaboration exist among data producing agencies and the major users of the product.

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International Trade in Services – Some Critical Issues

In an effort to advance the process of compiling statistics on International Trade in Services, the CARICOM Secretariat highlighted some critical issues at the Twenty-Seventh Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) which was held in Grenada in November 2002. These issues included:

- the framework to be used in the compiling of statistics on International Trade in Services and the implications for the collaborating national agencies;
- the choice of classification system, ISIC rev 3, BPM5, EBOPs, GNS/W/120 and the CPC;
- The modes of delivery of services as identified by the GATS, cross border-Mode 1, consumption abroad-Mode 2, commercial presence-Mode 3 and the presence of natural persons-Mode 4;

This article presents a brief review of the framework and also addresses the issue of inter-agency collaboration.

The Framework for the Production of International Trade in Services

Essentially, statistics on International Trade in Services rely on two basic frameworks, the System of National Accounts 1993 (1993 SNA) and the Balance of Payments Manual Fifth Edition of the IMF (BPM5). The 1993 SNA provides an analytical framework for the compilation of data on production of all industries in the economy inclusive of services. Some of the services that are produced are exported while the production process across all industries may require inputs of services some of which are imported. On the other hand the Balance of Payments (BOP) framework compiles data on the transactions of residents of a country with non-residents on both current account and capital account. Specifically the current account-services transactions form the basis for obtaining statistics on trade in services.

The UN Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services recommends an extension of the BPM5 classification to the Extended Balance of Payments in Services (EBOPS). However, the degree of detail required by governments, for regional and international negotiations as well as by businessmen and researchers, may not be reflected in the BPM5 or EBOPS framework. The United Nations Central Product Classification, Version 1.0 is one such classification that perhaps provide details at a product level that can satisfy the needs of negotiators. The collection of product level details with respect to the inputs and outputs of industries makes it possible to assemble information on inputs and output of services as well as on trade in services. In addition the concept of Trade in Services has broadened beyond the BPM5 framework to include statistics on Foreign Affiliate Trade in Services. As stated in the *Manual*,

enterprises in an economy may supply services internationally through the activities of their foreign affiliates abroad. This mode of supply, Mode 3, is called *commercial presence*.

Since Trade in Services can be collected through production-based surveys or BOP transactions, then the issue of collaboration between statistical agencies, i.e. Central Banks and National Statistical Offices becomes critical.

Collaboration among agencies in the collection of statistics on International Trade in Services

Organisations that compile the Balance of Payments do not necessarily require details beyond the BPM5. The collection of these statistics is mainly carried out through surveys of international transactions and administrative records and may contain some level of detail. This would therefore imply the investment of more resources to collect detailed data to the level CPC or even the EBCB. There would of course be implications for the response rates that may adversely affect compilers of the BOP.

It may be possible to collect data on imports and exports of services in the course of obtaining data to compile the National Accounts. Again, there is the problem of the level of detail and also how this affects the response rate. Further, even without considering the expanded requests for detailed data on Trade in Services, there is the added problem that in the absence of records on exchange controls both the National Statistical Offices and the Central Banks survey the same establishments for data on production and trade in services.

It may be more feasible for Central Banks and Statistical Offices to collaborate in the sharing of responsibilities with respect to the collection of statistics on International Trade in Services. Such an approach will alleviate the burden on the compilers or producers of statistics relative to overloading their questionnaires with details that are not directly related or considered priority to the accounts that they are compiling. Additionally, the collaboration will lead to greater consistency between the data compiled by both organizations e.g. the BOP and the National Accounts. Secondly, the issue of respondent burden can be more deftly handled if there is a synchronisation of the requests for information by the relevant organisations and an understanding with regard to the sharing of responsibilities for specific items and level of details. Thirdly, it will be necessary to have as partners, agencies such as the Inland Revenue Departments/Value Added Tax Offices, Immigration Departments, Customs Departments and Private Sector Associations in an effort to seek alternate sources of information not available through the conventional or official data collecting channels. Finally, this approach will lead to more efficient use of resources within data collection organisations and the avoidance of duplication of activities of data collection instruments and of respondents burden. ■

Third Meeting of the Advisory Group on Social Gender and Environment Statistics-St. George's, Grenada

Prior to the convening of the 27th SCCS Meeting, members of the Third Advisory Group Meeting was convened in Grenada to discuss the "CARICOM Programme on Strengthening Capacity in the Compilation of Statistics and Indicators in the CARICOM Region".

At the Second Meeting of the Advisory Group held in Dominica in May 2002, members of the group had presented different subject papers and it was based on these presentations that the CARICOM Secretariat formulated the CARICOM Programme, which provides:

- (i) The framework for the activities of data compilation and dissemination;
- (ii) The proposed list of statistics and indicators on social gender issues;
- (iii) Specific Additional Outputs to be produced by the Programme;
- (iv) Monitoring and assessing the achievements of outputs – Periodic Situation Analyses;
- (v) Sustainability of the CARICOM Programme with respect to staffing, technical assistance, funding, strategies for training, technology and collaboration with other agencies;
- (vi) The Schedule of Activities to be implemented in the CARICOM Programme.

The main objectives of the Third Meeting of the CARICOM Advisory Group were to:

- (i) Advance the process of implementation of the CARICOM Programme;
- (ii) Assess the feasibility of the scheduled programme of activities for implementing the programme; and
- (iii) Evaluate the relationship between the CARICOM Programme and other programmes in Social Gender and Environment Statistics, the Demographic Yearbook and the Millennium Development Goals.

Also discussed at this meeting were funding and technical assistance of the CARICOM Programme, and the progress of work on the Regional publications in Social /Gender and Environment Statistics.

Twenty-Seventh Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) - St. George's, Grenada

At the Twenty-Seventh (27th) Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) held in Grenada in mid-November, the opportunity arose to discuss issues

relative to the strengthening of capacity in the statistical systems at the Regional and National levels as reflected in a sample of agenda items:

- Statistical support to the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) - arriving at a strategic approach to strengthening capacity of statistical offices in the Region:
 - Management of Statistical Resources and Modernisation of Statistical Offices
 - Presentation of the Revised Resolution from the 26th SCCS Meeting
 - Presentation by PARIS21 –organisation of a Regional workshop in the Caribbean Region.
- Harmonisation of Statistics in the Region;
- Strengthening capacity with respect to the compilation of statistics on International Trade in Services;
- The implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts (1993 SNA);
- Merchandise Trade Statistics;
- Other areas of economic statistics—Prices, Informal Sector,
- Strengthening Capacity in the Compilation of Social Gender and Environment Statistics and Indicators for Conference Follow-up in the CARICOM Region;
- Prospects for statistical training and building research capability;
- Potential donor support for Regional statistical development.

The SCCS noted developmental work performed in the area of International Trade in Services and the need to convene an Advisory Group meeting in this area. Also NSOs were encouraged to convene stakeholders meetings to address issues in collection and compilation of trade in services. In the area of Merchandise Trade Statistics the meeting recalled the decision of the Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the SCCS for the submission of the previous year's trade data by the end of the first Quarter of the following year. With respect to the revised HS 2002, the meeting recommended that the introduction of this revision should be rescheduled to the beginning of 2004. The meeting also noted the conduct of the National Accounts Workshop in 2001 and commended the organisations involved (CARTAC, Eurostat, UNSD and CARICOM) for enabling the conduct of the workshop in 2002. On the documentation of statistical methodologies by Member States, the meeting urged National Statistical Offices (NSOs) to continue to document and submit methodologies to the Secretariat. The meeting also noted the elements of the core data set and the need to devise a way of incorporating this data set at the national levels.

On the presentation on the modernisation of statistical offices, the meeting underscored the need for NSOs to modify

Past Events and Outcomes, cont'd

(Continued from page 3)

their strategies and structures to meet new challenges being faced such as globalisation and scarce resources.

With respect to the presentation of the revised resolution from the 26th SCCS meeting, Investment in Statistics as a priority, the meeting endorsed the draft resolution and further work was required by the committee to enable its advancement..

In the area of Social and Environment Statistics, the meeting commended the UNSD for their support and also noted the presentation by the World Bank representative on the progress with respect to the MECOVI programme in the Region along with the other development partners. ■

National Accounts Workshop 2002

A National Accounts workshop was convened at the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank in St. Kitts and Nevis during November/December 2002, aimed at advancing the implementation of the 1993 SNA in CARICOM Member States, as well as the wider Caribbean region. The workshop was coordinated and/or financially supported by the Secretariat, UNSD, CARTAC and, the European Union through Eurostat. The workshop comprised two modules: Module I, dealt with the practical aspects involved in the implementation of the 1993 SNA and was geared towards directors and other senior officials involved in the compilation of National Accounts. Similar to the workshop held the previous year in Trinidad and Tobago, the focus was on the progress made in the implementation by the participating countries during the preceding year and presenting of work performed. Module II, on the other hand, was more theoretical and sought to train junior National Accounting staff in the concepts and definitions employed in the compilation of these statistics.

The next workshop is scheduled to take place in November 2003. The Secretariat would like to invite any of the countries inclusive of those in the wider Caribbean who are interested in hosting this workshop to communicate this information to the Secretariat. ■

The Regionally Coordinated 2000 Round of Population and Housing Censuses-An Update

At the time of writing this article, Guyana has completed most of its field enumeration exercise except for a few outlying areas which were delayed due to the difficult terrain of the interior areas of the country. In the meanwhile, however, coding and editing of the questionnaires for those areas in which field enumeration was completed has been taking place. Guyana has put in place the facility to use the OCR scanning technology, which will contribute in accelerating the availability of the census data.

Jamaica now has a clean census database and has produced and submitted a report to Government which contains the main findings of the Census, while data capture is almost at an end in most of the OECS Member States. The OECS Member States, in using the ICR scanning technology, have acquired very useful skills and experience in the use of the technology, which will serve the statistical infrastructure well between the census years. With respect to the exercise in Suriname, the Bureau of Statistics has planned, made arrangements for, and commenced its field operations during the first quarter of this year.

Throughout the census exercise, the extent of technical cooperation among the National Statistical Offices has been heartening. Sharing of experiences and expertise has gained momentum and has been of tremendous assistance to the census exercise and will be to the offices themselves ultimately.

Note: Questions and answer segment will appear in the next issue. ■

Future Events and Expectations

Meetings Of Importance To Statisticians

- * Twenty-Eight SCCS Meeting will be held in the Turks and Caicos Islands in October/November 2003. ■

Publications

The following is available from the Documentation Centre of the Secretariat for US\$25.00 each on CD-ROM, and US\$35.00 each in hard copy:

- *Women and Men in CARICOM Member States: Power and Decision Making 1980-2002*

You can expect to see these other publications within the next six months!

- *CARICOM's Trade—A Quick Reference to Some Summary Data*
- *CARICOM's Intra-regional Trade, Vol. II*
- *Women and Men in CARICOM Member States: Labour Force*

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