



# Stats News & Views

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

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## Main Events

### ***The Role of Environmental Statistics In Sustainable Development***

Statistics, on their own, or when converted to indicators, can provide a powerful mechanism to guide policy formulation, and to assess and evaluate existing policies and programmes. A major function of Environmental Statistics is exactly in this area i.e. in the assessment and evaluation of policies and programmes related to *sustainable development*. Despite the fact that the term sustainable development has not yet attracted any widely accepted definition, it has become a 'buzz phrase' in almost everyone's vocabulary. In this article, the term is used in the sense of meeting two basic societal needs:

- To achieve economic growth in order to secure rising standards of living conditions both now and for future generations; and
- To protect and enhance the environment now and for the future.

This article explores the role of environment statistics in assessing and evaluating policies and programmes, which enhance sustainable development.

Like other areas of statistics, the field of environment statistics requires a formal infrastructure focused solely or mainly on this area. In addition, the production of many of these statistics depends crucially on sustained cooperation with the various data producing agencies both in the public and private sectors. Some key agencies in the public sector are the Department of the Environment and the Forestry Department, and in the private sector, the cooperation of all the major

(Continued on page 2)

### ***Regional Capacity Building In Social Statistics***

In recent years the CARICOM Secretariat Statistics Sub-programme has been giving increased emphasis to social statistics. The data in this area are fundamental in depicting the quality of life of the peoples within the region, and in guiding policy formation in this regard. Developmental work is being executed on databases as well as on strategies that can inform the development of databases in the areas of *population and vital statistics, crime, health, labour force, the elderly*, and so forth, in some cases, at a very rudimentary level. This developmental work, however, has been merged with the UNSD/CARICOM Project, "Strengthening Capacity in the Compilation of Statistics and Indicators for Conference Follow-up in the CARICOM Region". This project commenced in July 2000 with the arrival of two United Nations Volunteers at the Secretariat. In its effort to build capacity both regionally and nationally in the development of the databases in social/gender statistics, this project is a vital contribution in supporting the current policies and needs of the region.

The gender issues which were considered to be of importance to the region formed the underlying basis for the development of the statistics and indicators in this project. The themes are *Economy, Education, Health, Crime and Power, and Decision-Making*. Capacity building has taken place in a number of ways, among them being the development and finalisation of sub-themes, and the production of a set of table formats comprising statistical indicators based on the issues.

(Continued on page 2)

## Contents

<b>Main Events – Feature Article – <i>The Role of Environmental Statistics in Sustainable Development, by Mr. Sylvan Roberts, Chief Statistician, Central Statistical Office, Belize;</i> <i>Regional Capacity Building in Social Statistics</i></b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Current Events – <i>Trade in Services; Census Update</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Past Events and Outcomes – <i>The UNSD/CARICOM Project Activities – Advanced Access Workshop, UNSD/CARICOM Follow-up Meetings;</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Future Events and Expectations – <i>Statistics Week – Barbados; 26th SCCS/9th RCCC; UNSD/CARICOM Expert Group Meeting; STECO Meeting; National Accounts Workshop</i></b>	<b>4</b>

### **The Role of Environmental Statistics in Sustainable Development**

(Continued from page 1)

industries is crucial to the process of obtaining comprehensive environment statistics. The coordinating role of the statistical office is indispensable, but this office must ensure in advance that adequate human capital is available to the office, for it to efficiently perform this role.

Needless to say, the political directorate must be committed both to sustainable development and to the usefulness of statistics. There is little question about Belize's commitment here, as reflected in the establishment of the very vibrant environment statistics unit which has already produced two very important publications. The first was a bulletin of environment statistics for Belize, and the second, which was published late last year, is a compendium of environment indicators. The Belize Government has strongly supported efforts to maintain the pristine natural beauty of the country, as evidenced by the fact that in 1996, 32% of the total territorial area was declared protected areas, and in the year 2000, this increased to 46%.

The importance of these statistics in evaluating sustainable development can be appreciated by considering some of the main environment indicators. One of the objectives of sustainable development is to pass on natural wealth – a wealth of wildlife, ample forests, arable land, etc. – to successive generations. The statistics on *protected areas* referred to earlier gives us a clear indication whether natural wealth is being handed down or not. When almost half of a country's territorial area is protected, the commitment to sustainable development is beyond any doubt. Allied to this indicator is *the rate of deforestation*, which also informs about the present generation's propensity to pass on natural wealth to successive generations. Obviously, the more rapid and rampant the rate of deforestation, the less likely our offspring will be able, for example, to use and enjoy the rain forests. In order to enhance sustainable development, if cutting down the rain forests becomes necessary from time to time, it must be carefully planned, and an active re-forestation programme should be initiated immediately.

Another example of an environmental statistic or indicator, which should be regularly monitored since it can have a serious impact on sustainability, is the *arable land per capita*. This indicator provides information showing whether agriculture and technology can satisfy the increasing demands for food. Urbanization, for example, increases pressure on the available agricultural land. This may limit the capacity of agricultural production to ensure an adequate level of food security. A recent estimate of this indicator for Belize shows that it is approximately 2.7 acres per capita. Sustainable development is more threatened, the smaller the

rate of arable land per capita.

Environment statistics and indicators are also very crucial in estimating the so called '*green accounts*'. The conventional National Accounts tables mainly report economic activities. The '*green accounts*' however, are complementary in the sense that they account for environmental changes. The integrated System of National and Environmental accounts provides a valuable tool in assessing sustainable development. With the advent of environmental accounts, production of goods, which may cause some degradation to the environment, is now factored into the system. Hence, it may mean that conventional levels of the GDP may have to be adjusted downwards when environmental damages are valued. Of course, value added from improvements to the environment and to the ecology, like reforestation, contribute positively to the overall GDP.

There is a growing need for countries to develop some of the key environment indicators for the very purpose of guiding decisions which impact on development. The need to develop environment accounts is also gaining higher priority, on the list of rapidly increasing demands currently placed on National Statistical Organizations. Having produced two sets of environment statistics and indicators, which have proved to be extremely useful, Belize is now at the threshold of generating her first set of environment accounts, starting with the Forestry Accounts. ■

### **Regional Capacity Building in Social Statistics**

(Continued from page 1)

May 2001 marked the commencement of a fundamental activity of documenting available in-house sources of data based on the required statistics and indicators for the five themes. This evaluation of the in-house data sources was a core activity for the project. In addition to its usefulness in guiding the process of extraction and compilation of available in-house data under the five themes, it highlighted the data gaps and deficiencies of relevant social and gender statistics for CARICOM Member States. This exercise of documenting the data sources has therefore played a significant role in many respects. Only data not available in-house were requested from National Statistical Offices, therefore reducing the burden of response. Table formats for data collection were dispatched to these offices in June 2001.

The identification of gaps in the data and the additional focus on conceptual differences in social statistics have

(Continued on page 3)

## Main Events cont'd

### **Regional Capacity Building in Social Statistics**

(Continued from page 2)

provided a foundation through which we can begin the very important task of harmonising these statistics within the region.

A most important feature of capacity building has been the particular focus of the gender perspective in the compilation of regional and national social statistics databases.

It is evident at this stage of project activities that among the main outcomes would be the documentation of gaps in the data, inclusive of the absence of sex dis-aggregated data. One of the measurable outputs is a regional publication of social/gender statistics. More significantly, the experience of this project should steer the region in a sustainable effort to strengthen the capacity to establish a framework for the compilation of databases in the social/gender statistics. The UNSD/CARICOM project can also act as a model in other countries that are interested in developing this area of statistics. ■

## Current Events

### **Trade in Services**

The CARICOM Secretariat commenced activities on the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) funded project to strengthen capabilities in the area of services statistics, "CARICOM Protocol II Trade Policy and Facilitation Project, Strengthening of Statistical Capabilities in Service Statistics in Member States".

The project originates in the Single Market and Economy Programme and is part of a wider project to enable Member States to fulfil their obligations under Protocol II which relates to the right of establishment, provision of services and movement of capital. Therefore the project is intended to enable the production of statistics on services to monitor the performance of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, and to inform investors and policy makers as it relates to the provision of services. The project focuses both on production and on international trade in services.

The activity currently underway is a situational assessment to identify the existing gaps in services data and information, the structure and capacity development required by National Statistical Offices, Central Banks and related National and Regional Organisations.

Three Canadian consultants have been retained by the

Secretariat to execute this situational assessment and have commenced field research in the Region. It is anticipated that the situational assessment can provide us with recommendations on the range of services statistics and information required to support external negotiations and to monitor the structure and performance of the services sector, including trade in services. ■

### **Census Update**

The regionally coordinated programme for the year 2000 Round of Population and Housing Censuses is continuing with success.

Those countries – Barbados, The Bahamas, Belize, Bermuda and Trinidad & Tobago – which carried out their census field enumeration in 2000 have progressed somewhat with cleaning their census data and have commenced tabulation of the data.

The OECS Member States have just completed their census field enumeration and are about to commence editing and coding of the census questionnaires. A five day training workshop in data processing is planned to be conducted in Saint Lucia in September 2001 to train participants from OECS Member States to process their census data. Participants at the workshop will include two persons from each OECS Member State; those persons must be directly involved in the processing of their country's census data. The workshop will therefore contribute to strengthening of skills and capabilities in census taking in the OECS Member States.

Discussions are continuing with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to secure technical and financial support for a regional project for analysis and dissemination of the census data. CIDA has expressed positive interest in providing support for the project.

Jamaica is somewhat advanced in its preparation to carry out the census field enumeration in September 2001, and Guyana, Suriname and the Turks and Caicos Islands are planning to conduct their census field enumeration in 2002. ■

## Past Events and Outcomes

### **UNSD/CARICOM Workshop in Advanced Access**

Under the project "Strengthening Capacity in the Compilation of Statistics and Indicators for Conference Follow-up in the CARICOM Region", UNSD/CARICOM hosted a workshop in *Advanced Access* during the period 18-22 June 2001, in Barbados. The specific training objectives

## Past Events and Outcomes, cont'd

(Continued from page 3)

were to:

- Familiarize statisticians with the relational database concepts;
- Impart basic knowledge and skills in the application of information technology in data compilation, analysis and dissemination;
- Devise methods of contributing to the development of statistics capabilities at the national and regional level.

All 15 CARICOM Member Countries, and three Associate Member States (Anguilla, British Virgin Islands and Turks and Caicos Islands) attended the workshop. ■

## Future Events and Expectations

### Statistics Week – Barbados

The Barbados Department of Statistics, established in 1956, will be celebrating *Statistics Week* to commemorate its forty-fifth year of existence. This first Statistics Week will be held in order to promote the work of the Department, to solicit the cooperation and support of the public for the survey programmes and to recognize the contribution of the staff to the Department. The proposed programme of activities during the week October 28-November 3, 2001 is as follows:

Sunday, October 28	Church Service
Monday, October 29	Health Awareness Day
Tuesday, October 30	Seminar on Tourism and Labour Force Statistics
Wednesday, October 31	Guest lecture for Staff
Thursday, November 1	Lecture for Staff
	Open Day (afternoon)
Friday, November 2	Open Day
Saturday, November 3	Awards Ceremony ■

### Joint Meeting of the RCCC and SCCS

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat will be convening the 9th meeting of the Regional Census Coordinating Committee (RCCC) on the 22-23 October and the 26th Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS), on the 24-26 October 2001 in Nassau, The Bahamas.

The RCCC meeting will evaluate the current situation with regard to the year 2000 Round of Population and

Housing Censuses in Member States and to formulate strategies for future activities in data processing and dissemination.

The 26th Meeting of the SCCS will provide a forum to discuss the progress and achievements in economic, social and environmental statistics, and other areas of statistics at the national and regional levels, and the strengthening of capacity in these areas. ■

### Other Meetings Of Importance To Statisticians

UNSD/CARICOM Expert Group Meeting – **8-12 October 2001**, Grenada.

Meeting of Statisticians, Trade Experts and Customs Officials (STECO) – **15-16 October 2001**, Barbados.

National Accounts Workshop – **5-9 November 2001**, Trinidad & Tobago. ■

## Publications

The *Balance of Payments of CARICOM Member States, 1990-1999* is now available and can be obtained from the Documentation Centre of the Secretariat for US\$15.00

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

- 📄 *National Accounts of CARICOM Member States*
- 📄 *External Debt of CARICOM Member States*
- 📄 *CARICOM's Selected Economic Indicators*
- 📄 *Labour Force Bulletin of CARICOM Member States*
- 📄 *Summary of Intra-regional Trade* ■

Please note that the *Question and Answer* segment will resume in our next issue.

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