

# **Stats News & Views**

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

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## Main Events

### Thirty-Third (33rd) Meeting Of The Standing Committee Of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) and Sixteenth (16th) Meeting of the Regional Census Coordinating Committee (RCCC)

The Thirty-Third Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (33rd SCCS) and the Sixteenth (16th) Meeting of the Regional Census Coordinating Committee (RCCC) took place in Christ Church, Barbados from 27—29 October 2008 and on the 30th October respectively under the theme “*Working Together to Improve Statistics in the Twenty-First Century and Beyond*”. Some of the technical issues discussed are highlighted in this issue.

### Regional Initiatives to Support Social Statistics - Implementation of DevInfo in the Region

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat was allocated funding by the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) in July 2007 towards the conduct of training for the implementation of the DevInfo Dissemination Software in Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, as well as for the purchase of equipment such as servers in both countries. The Secretariat is promoting the development and expansion of DevInfo in the Region as a data dissemination tool for statistics.

The DevInfo training commenced in December 2007 and was conducted in phases which continued in 2008. There were three phases of training in St Vincent and the Grenadines and two in Dominica. The first training sessions in both countries covered the use of the DevInfo User Module, the second covered training in the Administrative Module and the third session conducted only in St. Vincent

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## Main Events

### Establishment of the Statistical Sub-Committee (SSC)- Ninth European Development Fund Statistical Component (9th EDF)

The Statistical Work Programme Project forms part of a broader CARICOM project initiative funded by the **Ninth European Development Fund (9<sup>th</sup> EDF)**. It contributes to the intensification of regional integration in CARICOM. The overall objective of the project is to provide the decision makers of CARICOM with the information necessary to monitor and guide progress in the establishment and the strengthening of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), through the strengthening of the capacities of the Regional and National Statistical Systems for sustainable improvement in the production of economic statistics.

The objectives of the SSC are:

- To assess the progress of work on the statistical component of the project, specifically the achievements and outputs;
- To monitor the progress of activities and make recommendations based on the these activities as endorsed by the SCCS;
- To provide technical support and guidance on the project activities to be executed, project implementation rate and the project expenditures;
- To undertake any other activities deemed necessary for the effective implementation of the project .

The SSC will monitor progress in the project execution, provide strategic and policy guidance as well as review and provide recommendations on the annual work plans in collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat

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and the Grenadines covered both dimensions of the software. Of the two countries in which training was conducted, Dominica was able to launch its customised desktop version of DevInfo which was called NatureIsle Info on 11 July 2008. The CARICOM Secretariat has been following-up the process in St Vincent and the Grenadines. Additionally, both Member States were able to obtain computer equipment procured directly by UNICEF.

Staff Members of the CARICOM Secretariat Statistics Sub-programme, also benefited from an introductory course on the User Module. This training will continue in January 2009 for various small groups for both the User and the Administrator Module.

It is recognised that a best practice approach would be to identify a person in each country who will assist in the advancement of the process. A schedule is being developed for training to continue in 2009.

### **Meeting of the Third Advisory Group on Statistics (3rd AGS), 23-25 October, 2008**

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat convened the Third Meeting of the Advisory Group on Statistics (3<sup>rd</sup> AGS) from 23 – 25 October 2008 in Bridgetown, Barbados. All Advisory Group Members, with the exception of Dominica, participated in this meeting as well as one Observer Organisation – the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

The objective of the meeting was to further advance the development of statistics in the Region through the work of the AGS with its main focus on the Regional Statistical Work Programme (RSWP) and the CARICOM Economic Statistics Action Plan (CESAPs) developed in the Barbados meeting. Decisions made at this meeting were to be taken to the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) for final decision-making. These include:

- The Statistical Office should be the “one stop window” for data that must be submitted to CARICOM.
- The compilation and dissemination of Trade in Services data should be a collaborative effort between the Central Bank and the Statistical Office.
- A forum will be held to expand on the key elements in the Draft Strategic Plan for National Statistical Offices.

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based on the project’s work plan. Its membership comprises of representatives from the CARICOM Secretariat as well as the members of the Advisory Group on Statistics (AGS). Observers will comprise of representation from the delegation of the European Commission in Guyana, as well as representation from other organisations specified and approved by the members of the SSC.

The SSC is expected to meet twice a year at a place to be determined. However members of the SSC will be expected to communicate via an appropriate medium on urgent project matters. The SSC will establish its own Rules of Procedures, based upon the principle of consensus. Voting will be considered if consensus cannot be reached on a given matter and all efforts are exhausted.

### **First (1st) Regional Statistics Research Seminar**

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat held its First Regional Statistical Research Seminar in Barbados, on Friday 31 October 2008. This was in response to the number of challenges faced by National Statistical Offices throughout the Region due to the limited capability to conduct and establish research programmes which could lead to the improvement of statistics. The implications of the absence of such research programmes were discussed at the Second Meeting of the Advisory Group on Statistics (2<sup>nd</sup> AGS), held in San Ignacio, Belize in June 2008 and the decision was taken to conduct this initial seminar. The importance of executing such a research agenda was evident in the numerous benefits to be derived. Such benefits include enabling a better understanding of the data, allowing for methodological research in areas such as the methodology used in the construction of the Consumer Price Index (CPI); the approach to conducting Surveys of Living Conditions and facilitating the process of anonymisation/dissemination of micro data.

The research seminar presented papers under various themes covering the conduct of Population and Housing Censuses; the construction of Retail Price Indices (RPI); the Income and Household Surveys and the Construction of Poverty Lines and data gaps on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS). This initial seminar

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generated overwhelming interest which was evident in the more than adequate number of papers submitted for discussion. Copies of these papers can be downloaded from the CARICOM Statistics Website, [www.caricomstats.org](http://www.caricomstats.org).

### **Activities under the Common Census Framework - Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), United Nations Population Funds (UNFPA) and Department for International Development (DFID).**

The Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM) requested the assistance of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Department for International Development (DFID) to develop a Common Framework for the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses. Essentially the Common Framework will be used to collect, process and disseminate census data for region-wide comparability. In achieving these objectives, consensus will be sought on common core questions, common methodologies and common tools for data access and dissemination.

Additionally, recommendations and best practices will be disseminated and support will be given to implement the recommendations. The promotion of tools that facilitate access to census data and help dissemination will be supported under this project. The progress attained so far include the formulation of the Project Coordination Unit, the completion of a CARICOM Workshop on the Common Census Questionnaire, the circulation of Draft Recommendations, and the preparation of Terms of Reference and Expressions of Interest for the recruitment of consultants for the application of technical assistance to implement the Common Census Questionnaire and to commence the preparation of Common Methodologies.

The expected benefits of this project include the standardization of instruments for the creation, adoption and dissemination of a standardized methodology to produce high-quality social statistics from population census data. In so doing, the Region as a whole will benefit in the economic integration process.

### **Current Events**

#### **Training Session on the Online Trade Information System (Tradsys Online).**

The Statistics Sub-programme of the CARICOM Secretariat commenced Component Three (3) of its

### **Current Events**

project aimed at enhancing the dissemination of trade data in CARICOM in December 2008. Component Three (3) comprised of the Operation and Maintenance of Tradsys Online and encompasses training and equipment needs. The objective of this Component is to enable easy access to CARICOM's merchandise trade to all users.

The consultant on Component Three (3) visited the Secretariat during the period 1st—19th December, 2008 during which the following activities were executed:

- Installation of the Online Trade Information System (Tradsys Online);
- Training in the various programming languages used by the Tradsys Online System including Structured Query Language (SQL), Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) and ASP.net;
- Review of Tradsys Online with demonstrations of its report generation capabilities and administrative functions; and
- Training in the modifications of the Tradsys Online programme to incorporate future changes.
- Review of next steps to complete the project.

### **Past Events and Outcomes**

#### **Workshop on Fertility and Mortality Statistics, 28 July—1 August 2008, St. George's Grenada**

A Workshop on Fertility and Mortality was held from Monday 28 July to Friday 1 August, 2008 at the Coyaba Resort, St. George's, Grenada. The main objective of this training was to focus on the compilation of Fertility and Mortality Statistics. This training was a follow-up to the Workshop on Strengthening Capacity of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in CARICOM Member States-Improvement of Statistics on Fertility and Mortality, held in 2005 in Guyana. This was part of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat's efforts to strengthen capacity to produce Social/Gender and Environment Statistics in the Region, and to inform policy and decision making in this area.

Financial support for the 2008 Workshop was received from The World Bank Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (TFSCB) and the Ministry of Health in Belize.

Fifteen (15) participants from the National Statistical Offices (NSOs), Civil Registration as well as Vital Statistics and Health Department from four (4) Member States (Grenada, Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Vincent and the Grenadines) attended the Workshop. The

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## Past Events and Outcomes

training was conducted by a Bio-Statistician in the Region. Among the items on the training programme were:

- Internationally recommended Standards for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics;
- Coding of death (International classification of Causes of Death) – practical implementation;
- Compilation and tabulation from Administrative Records/ Vital Statistics; and
- Presentation and interpretation of Vital Statistics/ Rates/Ratios.

### Third Demographic Analysis Workshop, 2nd June - 18 July 2008, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat convened its Third Regional Workshop on Demographic Analysis from 2 June—18 July 2008 in Trinidad and Tobago. The Workshop was held at the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) on the St. Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies, and was made possible under a grant from the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB). The objectives were:

- To strengthen and sustain the capacity of Member States in the conduct of demographic analysis;
- To promote demographic research on available data from censuses, vital statistics and surveys;
- To develop a cadre of trained personnel in demography within Member States;
- To encourage networking and south-south co-operation amongst practitioners in this area.

Twenty (20) participants were trained at this Workshop in 2008. It offered training on essential concepts and methods in Demography, including Evaluating the Quality of Demographic Data, Demographic Theories, Measures of Fertility, Nuptiality and Mortality, preparation of Model-Life Tables and Indirect Techniques of Estimation.

The sessions were delivered by lecturers from the University of the West Indies and included, practical computer laboratory sessions, work assignments and examinations. Participants were graded on a combination

## Future Events

of these assessment methods.

### The Way Forward for Information Communication Technology (ICT) Statistics in the Region.

The Statistics Sub-committee for ICT statistics in the Region scheduled a meeting for February 2009 to

advance its activities in this area. Following its Inaugural Meeting in October 2007, where the Terms of Reference (TORs) were developed for its effective functioning and a Draft Action Plan formulated, this Sub-committee is tasked with identifying a list of core indicators for the Region that will be used to guide policy

It was agreed in the meeting of 2007 that, work will be advanced on the scope of the ICT Sector with emphasis on relevance to the CARICOM Region. It was agreed that the core set of indicators for the Region will comprise those recommended by the Information Society (IS) Partnership so as to maintain international comparability, but at the same time, it will also comprise of those indicators which are of importance in the formulation of policy for the development of the Region. It is anticipated that the final draft of core indicators relevant to the Region, would be available in mid 2009. The next step will then be to collect, compile and analyze that data so that the best policy solutions can be developed.

With the cross-cutting nature of ICT much emphasis is being placed on activities to promote advancement as well as the smooth implementation and execution of the Action Plan.

### Proposal for Caribbean Statistics Day

The observance of a Caribbean Statistics Day was proposed by the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21) at the Second Advisory Group Meeting on Statistics (2<sup>nd</sup> AGS) held in Belize in June 2008.

It is believed that the observance of this day will create greater awareness in the area of statistics as well as advance key areas of Statistical Advocacy, specifically raising the profile of the Statistics Offices in the Region.

## Publications

Forthcoming publications:

- *CARICOM's National Accounts Report –2003-06;*
- *Selected Economic Indicators 2002-2006.*
- *CARICOM's Trade—A Quick Reference to Some Summary Data—2001-2006*

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