



# Stats News & Views

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

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## Main Events

### Establishing (SIMDG) Committees – The Way Forward for Social Statistics in the CARICOM Region

The Social Indicators and Millennium Development Goals (SIMDG) committee comprises representatives of a variety of agencies responsible for the production of Social Statistics and also users of these statistics in Member States. These representatives are from the Statistics Departments/Central Statistical Offices; Ministries such as Education, Labour, Social Development and Finance; Registrars of Births and Deaths, International Organisations, Campuses of the various Universities, Police Departments, National Women's Organisations and other similar organisations.

It was created to institutionalise the production, dissemination and use of Social/Gender Statistics in the CARICOM Region and is a distinctive feature of the *CARICOM Programme on Strengthening Capacity in the Compilation of Social/Gender and Environment Statistics and Indicators* formulated during the Second Advisory Group Meeting in Dominica in 2002.

Originally the intention was to name the committee, the *Social Indicators Coordinating Committee* but due to the focus on the indicators that measure the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the core indicators of the CARICOM Programme the suggestion to name the Committee, SIMDG, was accepted. *The underlying principle of the SIMDG is building capacity through effective coordination at the national level.*

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### The Statistics Forum: Discussion on the formulation of a Draft Statistics Programme for the Region

The Caribbean Community Secretariat launched an electronic forum early in May 2004 to facilitate discussions and suggestions on issues of importance in the field of statistics and also to guide the future development of statistics in the region. The development of a Draft Statistical Programme for the Region was in the agenda of the 28th Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) held in Providenciales, Turks and Caicos Islands during 3-5 November 2003.

It was decided that further discussions were required on the paper that was presented as a result of which the Secretariat commenced the Internet-based forum to refine the programme. To date the forum comprises approximately fifty three (53) members who were invited to join the discussion list. The discussions have identified six (6) themes that reflect core issues requiring statistics and indicators to guide and assist the formulation of policies and decision-making in the Region. These themes are:

- Economy, Finance and Investment;
- Population, Demographics and Social and Living Conditions;
- Environment;
- Information, Communication Technology (ICT);
- Public Relations and Data Dissemination;
- Statistical Coordination.

Each theme comprises programme areas such as Tourism;

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## Main Events cont'd

### **Establishing SIMDG Committees** *(continued from page 1, Col. 1)*

Experience has shown that bringing all stakeholders together to solve a problem or to address an issue invariably maximizes the success of the outcome. This approach received tremendous support at the planning stages of the CARICOM Programme on Social/Gender and Environment Statistics. It is of paramount importance that all stakeholders work as a team if we are to achieve the greatest returns from our efforts to institutionalise the production of Social/Gender Statistics Indicators.

Among the objectives of the SIMDG committees the following can be highlighted:

- to enhance the production of Social/Gender statistics and indicators through effective teamwork;
- to facilitate more analyses of these statistics;
- to promote wider dissemination and use of these statistics.

Undoubtedly, the greater the utility and meaningfulness of these statistics, the better would be the support and interest at all levels. Since the SIMDG committee enhances a user culture in statistics, it is therefore appropriately poised to attract investment that is currently lacking in the field of statistics in our region. There are several reasons why the SIMDG model is crucial to the process of enabling the sustained production and use of social statistics and indicators. The variety of producers of these statistics necessitates a coordinating mechanism such as this committee. The committee can work towards harmonization of concepts, definitions and methodologies to facilitate comparisons within and across Member States. The committee can also monitor and evaluate the timeliness and quality of outputs to ensure that they comply with the accepted regional and international guidelines and standards.

Therefore, the committee can foster transparency of the final outputs, enhancing the image of statistics and attracting the support of all stakeholders. The SIMDG committee is appropriately positioned to fuel the engine of growth of a user culture in the field of statistics, which is essential as we move towards the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). The SIMDG committee will also enable the diffusion of the expertise of the various agencies engaged in the production of Social/Gender Statistics, leading to the

filling of the data gaps that currently exist.

Under the CARICOM programme, SIMDG committees have been established in thirteen (13) of the fifteen (15) Member States, and in four (4) of the five (5) Associate Member States. The current thrust of the work of the committees is to produce the core Social/Gender indicators for the Region with specific focus on the production of those indicators that reflect the MDGs and to enable their wide dissemination and use.

Indeed, there are some challenges ahead. However, on the positive side, the international support to establish the SIMDG Committees has been very encouraging, particularly from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and The World Bank. Immediate efforts are being made using different capacity building strategies to directly assist Member States in preparing the core indicators. A series of in-country training workshops focusing on practical issues of data organization have been launched in Member States. At the same time, exchange visits within the region are being planned for SIMDG staff to expose them to activities which are practically oriented. All activities under the programme will involve all members of the SIMDG committees. It is expected that this approach will foster more sustainable capacity building within the region to collect, compile, analyze, disseminate and use Social/Gender Statistics and Indicators.

### **Statistical Forum** *(continued from page 1)*

International Trade in Services, Investment flows, Poverty and Migration including Free Movement Statistics. *The next step entails the refining of the objectives, expected outputs and actions for each of the Programme areas.* The results of this stage will appear on the Statistics website, [www.caricomstats.org](http://www.caricomstats.org), in July 2004.

## Current Events

### **Fourth Advisory Group Meeting : Reporting, Monitoring and Advancing the CARICOM Programme**

The CARICOM Advisory Group that was set up in 2001 to formulate and monitor the CARICOM Programme on

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Strengthening Capacity for the Compilation of Social Gender and Environment Statistics and Indicators in the CARICOM Region held its Fourth Meeting June 7 - 11, 2004 in Belize.

The Meeting provided a forum for the discussion of the progress, achievements and constraints faced in programme implementation of the Social/Gender component and in particular to review the mechanism used to build capacity at the national level. The Meeting also served to advance the programme through the discussion of future activities planned in the Social/Gender component as well as to develop a framework for the activation of the Environment Component.

Among the main decisions of the meeting were:

- Directors/Chief Statisticians should be more assertive in ensuring the functioning of the SIMDG Committees, with the models of Suriname and Belize being examples to be replicated throughout the region.
- The recognition that crucial areas of training required in the Region are report writing, data analysis and sampling techniques.

The Draft Summary of Recommendations and Conclusions of this meeting would shortly be available at [www.caricomstats.org](http://www.caricomstats.org).

### **Correlation between the HS 2002 Version of the Common External Tariff (CET) and the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) Rev. 3**

The Correlation Table linking the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS)2002 version of the Common External Tariff (CET) with the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) Revision 3 is completed and was dispatched to Member States for the compilation of their Merchandise Trade Statistics during June 2004.

The CET is used by each CARICOM Member State to classify every commodity traded and to calculate the appropriate duties for these commodities. It is based on the HS System prepared by the World Customs Organisation (WCO). As such with every revision of the HS the CET has to be updated. The HS nomenclature classifies commodities mainly by their

physical properties rather than by economic characteristics.

The SITC Rev. 3 on the other hand, was developed by the United Nations mainly for economic analysis. This classification system groups commodities by stages of processing and economic end-use. It is this system that many researchers and other users utilize to perform trade analysis.

The HS and the SITC Rev. 3 classify commodities up to the six-digit and five-digit levels respectively at the international level. Member States are free to add additional digits beyond these levels to capture detailed commodities that are significant to their economies and which require monitoring. The CET document contains a number of items with additional digits beyond these levels in order to capture and monitor their trade. However for international comparison and analysis these detailed commodities should correspond back to the international classifications.

Because these two classification systems are based on different approaches there was need to correlate them to avoid having to capture or code the data more than once. This has lead to the United Nations Statistics Division preparing a Correlation Table that matches the HS to the SITC Rev. 3 at the six-digit and five-digit level respectively. This assisted countries in the conversion of their trade data from HS to SITC Rev. 3. Updating of the HS to 2002 implied that the Correlation Table prepared by the Secretariat must be updated and also must be in conformity with the UN HS-SITC Rev. 3 Correlation Table for the purposes of international comparison and analysis.

Preparation of the Correlation Table also took into consideration the need for some degree of consistency, where possible, with the 1996 HS-based CET, i.e. it ensured wherever possible that “apples” in 1996 are not coded as “oranges” in 2002. Thus conformity with UN HS-SITC Rev. 3 was checked first followed by the maintenance of the SITC Rev. 3 codes used in 1996.

As each Member State’s trade statistics are derived from the declaration of goods at the Customs departments, the data captured are recorded at the HS level, which is converted to SITC via the Correlation table. It is therefore important for the Correlation Table to be *accurate* as this implies that *accurate* trade data are derived provided that there are no discrepancies at

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## Current Events cont'd

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the initial stage of data collection.

In conclusion, it should be noted that most Member States are yet to implement the HS2002 version of the CET, which was supposed to be in effect as at January 2004. However the few that have implemented this updated CET will now be able to generate their Merchandise Trade Statistics based on the revised nomenclature.

### The Statistics Intranet : Developmental Work

Work is in progress on the Statistics Intranet using Macromedia Dreamweaver Software. The site is supported by easy navigation, friendly page design, links and texts and is linked to the Secretariat's Intranet. The site will provide internal users with access to the social and economic databases maintained by the Sub-programme as well as to the publications regularly produced. At the time of launching, tentatively set for the end of July, data will be available on Trade, both in goods and services, National Accounts, Balance of Payments, External Debt and Population with some databases extending from 1980 to 2003. More datasets will be added on a continuous basis.

## Past Events

### Developing a Directory of Statistics Databases

The Statistics Sub-programme has developed a directory of its electronic databases which summarises data available on Member States and the corresponding time period. The directory is presented in Microsoft Excel format and is to be transferred further in MS Access. It is disaggregated into the areas of Social and Economic Statistics. This directory effectively provides users with information on data available at a glance.

The directory was compiled from the Statistics databases and placed into spreadsheets to make it more user friendly. The Economic data focuses on the Balance of Payments, Banking Statistics, External Debt and Investment, etc, while the Social Data encompasses data on Climate, Poverty, Crime and Labour Force, etc for CARICOM Member States.

With the development of the Environment Component of the CARICOM Programme an extension of the directory to

reflect Environment Statistics will be instituted.

The directory is very useful for those requiring the data for the purpose of assessment and evaluation. It will be available for viewing on the CARICOM Statistics Intranet, and subsequently on the Statistics Web Site.

## Questions and Answers

In this issue we provide a succinct explanation of the question raised in our last issue on the difference between incidence and prevalence.

The Prevalence Rate is the number of existing cases of a given condition per population at a given point in time.

The Incidence Rate is the number of new cases that develop per population at risk at a given point in time.

## Future Events and Expectations

- *Second Meeting on Harmonisation of Social Statistics;*
- *Regional Workshops on International Trade in Services and International Migration—in collaboration with UNSD;*
- *Workshop on 1993 SNA focusing on Supply and Use Tables;*
- *Twenty Ninth SCCS Meeting—Bermuda.*

## Publications

We are currently working on the following publications:

- *CARICOM's Trade—A Quick Reference to Some Summary Data: 1996—2001*
- *CARICOM's National Accounts Report: 2000—2002*
- *CARICOM's Balance of Payments: 1997—2002*
- *CARICOM's Selected Economic Indicators: 1998—2002*
- *Labour Force Statistics: 1980, 1990 & 2000 Censuses*

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