

Stats News & Views

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

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Main Events

CARICOM Economic Statistics Meeting, 19-20 June 2008, Bridgetown Barbados

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat in collaboration with the Caribbean Regional Technical Assistance Centre (CARTAC) and other Observer Organisations of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians, convened an Economic Statistics Meeting titled “**Strategising for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in the Region**” during the period June 19-20, 2008 in Christ Church, Barbados. The goal of the meeting was to assess the impact of developmental work put in place in addressing Economic Statistics in the Region, focusing on the areas of National Accounts, selected Short Term Indicators, International Trade in Services and Investment Flows, Merchandise Trade, Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) and Economic Activity .

The main objective of the meeting was to develop an Action Plan for technical assistance from sources such as the Ninth European Development Fund (9th EDF) , CARTAC as well as other organizations and development partners. The meeting also identified current critical gaps and issues in the range and quality of Economic Statistics.

The Action Plan for the strategic development of the above mentioned areas of economic statistics was formulated taking into consideration the intervention proposed under the Caribbean Integration Support Programme (CISP); the relevant areas of the Regional Statistical Work Programme (RSWP) that was approved by the Community Council of Ministers in 2005; the Work Programme of CARTAC; the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) and of the International Labour Organisation (ILO); and the national level strategies for the development of Economic Statistics in Member States and Associate Members.

Main Events

This Action Plan was discussed at the Second Meeting of the Advisory Group on Statistics (2nd AGS) which was held from 23—27 June 2008. Discussions at the Thirty Third (33rd) Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) meeting were to focus on appropriate measures that will support its swift implementation. ■

Meeting of the Second Advisory Group (2nd AGS) on Statistics, 23-26 June 2008

The Second Meeting of the Advisory Group on Statistics was held at the San Ignacio Hotel, Belize, from 23 – 26 June 2008. The primary areas of focus were the common Regional Statistical Work Programme (RSWP) of minimum activities to be implemented by countries; a review of Outputs from the Economic Statistics Meeting held in Barbados; a Strategic Plan for Developing National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and the Establishment of a Project Steering Committee (PSC) for the Caribbean Integration Support Programme (CISP).

Focus was also placed on the structure, both the institutional as well as the statistical component of an Assessment Questionnaire to be administered in CARICOM Member States. There was progress as it related to the coordination of major Statistical activities, as well the development of a research agenda for the region. The Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) was also reviewed as a mechanism for statistical development and harmonization.

The implementation of national strategies in Member States and Associate Members were also examined. Major discussions were also held with the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty First Century (PARIS 21).

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Main Events

Technical Working Group Meeting to Review the Proposed Indicators for the Measurement of the Caribbean Specific Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The Inaugural Meeting of the Technical Working Group to review the Proposed Indicators for the Measurement of the Caribbean Specific Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was held at the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), on 28-30 January 2008. This meeting was organized by the CARICOM Secretariat in collaboration with the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) to consider more fully the Caribbean Specific MDGs as well as the recommendations from the Ninth (9th) Meeting of the CARICOM Advisory Group on Social Statistics held in Dominica on 4-6 July 2007.

- Discussions at the meeting focused on the eighty-nine (89) proposed indicators which were divided among the eight (8) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These discussions were guided by the following areas:
- The ability to measure the existing indicator;
- Whether the proposed indicator can be better defined or if an existing proxy indicator can provide the same information;
- With respect to bullet (2) provide the new or revised indicators where applicable or give reasons why a particular indicator should not be included;
- Comment on the method of computation of the indicators where it is measurable;
- Identification of sources for the indicators;
- Identification of frequency of availability of the indicators; and
- The provision of recommendations or information for these indicators.

During the meeting, two working groups were established to consider and further refine the proposed targets and indicators. Some of the recommendations arising out of the detail review included:

- **Average national income of men and women by sector of employment** : it was agreed that the income being referred to should be gross earnings in order to ensure that datasets were compatible and consistent.
- There was need to specify the chronic diseases referred to in the context of the indicator on **Prevalence of chronic diseases by sex and age**.

- **Sanitary and phytosanitary rules implemented by developed countries which exceed the standards specified by international organisations**: it was not possible to measure rules and as a consequence it was felt that this was not an indicator. These rules should instead be monitored by individual countries to ascertain whether there were rules that were exceeded by other countries.

Current Events

Progress towards Online Access of CARICOM's Regional Trade Information System (TradSys)

In 2006, the Inter- American Development Bank (IDB) funded a project aimed at enhancing the dissemination of trade data in CARICOM through the facilitation of online access to the regional trade information system (Tradsys). The project is divided into the following components:-

- Component 1 – Harmonisation and Strengthening of Trade Data Submission by Member States;
- Component 2 – Update Tradsys and launch online interface with user manual;
- Component 3 – Operation and Maintenance of Tradsys: Training and Equipment.

The Report, Data Submission Protocol and Action Plans of Component 1 were prepared and approval was received from the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) meeting in November 2007. Following the postponement of the Statisticians, Trade Experts and Customs Officials (STECO) meeting in April 2008, the Secretariat, in an effort to get approval from all stakeholders requested the National Statistical Offices (NSO) to consult with the main stakeholders (Customs Officials and Trade Policy Experts) and to arrive at an agreement on the Data Submission Protocol and endorsement of the Action Plan. The next step will be for the Secretariat to seek formal approval of the Protocol from the Council of Trade and Economic Development (COTED).

With regards to Component 2, a consultant was hired in February 2008 to develop the online trade reporting module. He visited the CARICOM Secretariat during the period 3 – 7 March, 2008 in order to exchange ideas and clarify issues relating to the following expected outputs:

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- Updating the current TradSys rectifying all problems identified during the review.
- An online interface to allow users to query TradSys remotely.
- User and Reference manuals and any other documentation relevant to the efficient operation of the online interface.
- Training workshops in computer applications used in the development and maintenance of the online interface and database.

Arising out of these meetings, several decisions and recommendations were forthcoming which included:-

- It was suggested that a change management team be set up to monitor and assess the effects associated with the transition to an online trade database.
- In addition to the User Manual, associated with the transition it was suggested that special “Train-the-Trainer” programs be held in order to maximize use of the system both within the Secretariat and externally.
- The system would be evaluated by the Consultant at a future date, possibly within one year after installation and recommendations on any possible improvements to maintain the system would be made at that time. ■

Past Events and Outcomes

Support for DevInfo Implementation in the Commonwealth of Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat Statistics Sub-programme received funding from United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF) in July 2007 for training, the purchase of equipment and implementation of the DevInfo software in Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Training missions in Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines were part of a series of training previously conducted in Guyana, Barbados and Saint Lucia. These missions were conducted by staff members of the Secretariat’s Statistics section who received training in the use and administration of DevInfo from UNICEF. Three training sessions were conducted in St Vincent and the Grenadines and two (2) sessions in Dominica, each for a duration of one(1) week. The first training session in the DevInfo User Module was administered in each of these countries during the period 3-7 December 2007.

Past Events and Outcomes

Follow-up training in the administration and application of the software was conducted in Dominica and in St. Vincent and the Grenadines during the period 31 March - 4 April 2008. Both countries also benefited from the Training of Trainers workshop conducted by UNICEF in Barbados during May 2008.

A final follow-up training in the Use and Administration of the software was conducted during the period 2-6 June 2008 in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Of the two countries in which training was conducted, Dominica launched the desk-top version of DevInfo (NatureisleInfo) in July and is expected to launch the online version in quick succession. St Vincent and the Grenadines is likely to follow with the launch of their system (HairounaInfo or VincyInfo) in the last quarter of 2008 with further support from CARICOM.

The two Member States received one Server each from UNICEF to assist in the creation of an online version of their adaptation of DevInfo. ■

Training on Census Data Capturing and Processing Ocho Rios, Jamaica, March 10-19, 2008

Training on Census Data Capturing and Processing was organized by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in collaboration with CARICOM Secretariat in support of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses in the English and Dutch Speaking Caribbean. The objective of the training arose from numerous requests for technical assistance with regards to data capturing and processing. It focused on the Information Technology (IT) aspects of data entry, cleaning, tabulation, e-publishing and mapping of results in preparation for the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Census.

The usefulness of this training was evident in the outputs achieved. This included shared information among countries on the freely available CS Pro Software for the capturing and processing of census data. Collaboration is required between countries and the international and regional organizations in order to adequately prepare for the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Census. ■

CARICOM Meeting of Population and Housing Census Experts- Ocho Rios, 17-19 March 2008

The CARICOM Secretariat convened the **CARICOM Meeting of Population and Housing Census Experts** pursuant to a decision made at the Fifteenth Meeting of

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Past Events and Outcomes

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the Regional Census Coordinating Committee (RCCC) in November 2007 which recommended that the Secretariat convene a meeting to discuss challenges experienced in the 2000 Round of Population and Housing Censuses in an effort to :

- Assimilate key country experiences and challenges of the 2000 Round of Population and Housing Censuses that affected significantly the conduct of the censuses in the Region;
- Articulate the mechanisms that were used to circumvent or lessen the effect of these challenges;
- Forge consensus with respect to best practices that may be applicable in countries in the Region;
- Formulate guidelines and approaches to inform strategies for the 2010 Round of Population Housing Censuses.

Some of the major issues that the Meeting focused on included the areas of crime and violence, accessibility of various subgroups of the population for enumeration, staff performance and integrity including problems with supervisors and enumerators, climatic and physical conditions, politics, mapping and documentation of census activities in Administrative Reports. A manual documenting challenges and best practices is to be produced.

Statistics Quotes and Sayings

- Facts are stubborn, but statistics are more pliable. ~Mark Twain (1835-1910)
- Torture numbers, and they'll confess to anything. ~Gregg Easterbrook
- Do not put your faith in what statistics say until you have carefully considered what they do not say. ~William W. Watt
- There are two kinds of statistics, the kind you look up and the kind you make up. ~Rex Stout, *Death of a Doxy*
- A statistical analysis, properly conducted, is a delicate dissection of uncertainties, a surgery of suppositions. ~M.J. Moroney
- Statistics can be made to prove anything - even the truth. ~Author Unknown

Future Events

Re-designing of the CARICOM Statistics Website (www.caricomstats.org)

Enhancing data dissemination strategies in the region is considered among the top priorities of the CARICOM Regional Statistics Sub-programme. The staff of the Regional Statistics Sub-programme embarked on the task of designing a web page to give a fresh look to the current statistics website. This new website will seek to enhance the user friendliness and accessibility to data and information of the current website. Features of the new website will include a search engine which will allow for timely access to data, links to TradSys Online, the future online trade database, CARICOMInfo, the adapted version of the DevInfo software technology and the new help desk facility.

The objective of this re-design is to bring about a significant increase in new users of the site. It is also expected that as the above mentioned databases become functional, requests for data internally and externally will gradually be reduced as persons begin to access trade and certain social indicators through these databases.

The development of the new website has proven to be timely given the establishment of the Ninth EDF (9th EDF) component which will serve to provide technical assistance for further development with regards to the launch of other online enhanced statistical databases in the areas of Trade in Services, National Accounts and other Economic Statistics.

The Statistics Sub-programme anticipates that its new website will be launched in December 2008 with a short testing period to fix any unforeseen problems. ■

Publications

The following publication is now available from the Documentation Centre:-

📖 *Balance of Payments of CARICOM Member States: 1998-2004;*

Forthcoming publications:

📖 *Selected Economic Indicators 2004-2006*

📖 *National Accounts Digest:2003-2006.*

📖 *Foreign Direct Investment: 2001—2005*

Published publications are available on our website in PDF

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