

2nd HIGH LEVEL FORUM ON STATISTICS

INTRODUCTION

In May 2014, The CARICOM Secretariat convened a series of meetings in Grenada. The second High Level Advocacy Forum (HLF) was held along with other side meetings. These included a Census Symposium on the 2010/2020 Rounds of Population and Housing Census, a seminar on Multi-Dimensional Poverty and the Estimation of Labour Force Statistics. The Fourteenth Meeting of the CARICOM Advisory Group on Statistics (14th AGS) which served to establish the Board of Directors of the Caribbean Association of Professional Statisticians (CAPS), was also held during this period. An Information Technology Fair for Statistics, was held during the first three days of the round of meetings.

A detailed account of these meetings are found in this newsletter.

THE SECOND HIGH LEVEL ADVOCACY FORUM ON STATISTICS: 26th May 2014

In response to the call for a data revolution, the Second High Level Advocacy Forum on Statistics was convened in St. George's, Grenada on 26 May 2014, under the theme **"A data revolution for sustainable development with a new international initiative to improve the quality of statistics and information available to citizens"**.

The main objective of the Forum was to enable high-

(Continued on page 2 column1)

2nd HIGH LEVEL FORUM ON STATISTICS

THE CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL STATISTICIANS (CAPS).



The Board of Directors - CAPS

The inaugural Meeting of the Caribbean Association of Professional Statisticians (CAPS) was held on 28th May 2014 and focused on the establishment of a Board of Directors for CAPS. The payment of fees for membership commenced at the 14th AGS Meeting. It was suggested that the annual fee for full membership in be US\$100, while the fee for retired members be fifty percent of the cost. The full payment of fees would provide persons with full membership. The membership form and well as other related matters for the establishment of this body, will be dealt with at the first meeting of the CAPS.

Contents

The Second High Level Advocacy Forum: 26th May 2014; The Caribbean Association of Professional Statisticians

*The 14th Meeting of the Advisory Group on Statistics (AGS)
The Caribbean Population and Housing Census Symposium*

The Regional Statistics Seminar

The Seminar on Multi-Dimensional Poverty

Proposed Project for the Regional Advancement of Statistics in the Caribbean (PRASC)

1
3
4
5
-
6
7
8

(Continued from page 1 column 1)

level commitment by governments of CARICOM to the strengthening of the National Statistical Systems (NSS) as a key means of sustaining the development and availability of timely, high-quality and relevant statistics for decision-making, which will lead to good governance, accountability and improved standards of living of the people of the Community.

Opening remarks were delivered by Dr. Philomen Harrison, Project Director—Regional Statistics on behalf of the Deputy Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community. She provided a background to the organisation of the Forum which she stated was originally scheduled to be part of the observance of the International Year of Statistics (Statistics2013). She also highlighted some of the main issues affecting the region and the importance of advocating for statistics at the highest level in order to reduce poverty and improve the standard of living in developing countries. She also recognised the contributions of International Development Partners (IDPs) in strengthening statistical capacity in the Region.

The opening ceremony also featured remarks by Mr. Ewout Sandher, Head of Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union to Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and the Dutch Overseas Countries and Territories; Ms. El Iza Mohamedou, Deputy Secretariat Manager, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); PARIS21 Secretariat; Mr. Crispin Gregoire, Chief for the Caribbean Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and Mr. McDonald Thomas, Operations Officer, Social Sector Division, Caribbean Development Bank (CDB).

The foregoing remarks as well as a video of the opening ceremony can be found on the section's website at the following link: http://www.caricomstats.org/2_high_level_forum.htm.

The Keynote Address by Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith C. Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada



“Use me as an Advocate for Statistics” were the words of the Prime Minister, Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith C. Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada

The Keynote Address was delivered by **Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith C. Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada** who warmly welcomed everyone to the Isle of Spice and especially to this important Forum. He stated that the presence of delegates signified the importance of the role of statistics and its further development for the advancement of the people of the Region. He further stated that as a trained Statistician, he felt a heightened sense of responsibility to ensure that the bar of this very important area was raised for the advancement of the Region and reiterated that statistics was not only important for policy-makers but also to drive the development outcomes for the people of the Region.

Prime Minister Mitchell reiterated that the main objective of the Forum which was to enable high-level commitment by governments of CARICOM to the strengthening of the National Statistical Systems (NSS) as a key means of sustaining the development and availability of timely, high-quality and relevant statistics for decision-making, and for the empowerment of citizens of the entire Region. He stated that development was about empowering the citizens of CARICOM, whether it was through education and skills statistics must be funded in these Challenging times.

He also stated that in the Region, there were
(Continued on page 3 column 1)

2nd HIGH LEVEL ADVOCACY FORUM ON STATISTICS

(Continued from page 2 column 2)

tremendous and quite similar challenges being faced in the respective countries including: low and slow economic growth, high rates of unemployment, high national debt, fiscal imbalances, relatively high levels of poverty and high import bills, therefore there is the need by governments for funding for this critical area. ***“Every development dollar must count. None must be wasted. Governments and citizens alike need relevant and timely information on which to make decisions”*** - were the words of Prime Minister Mitchell.

He further stated that the Region witnessed a defining moment with the launch of the first meeting of the CARICOM Association of Professional Statisticians (CAPS). He stated that CAPS was a welcomed development since the statistical services in countries must be professionalised. He stated that ***“Young bright students must see an exciting career path in statistics and information and be attracted to pursue careers in this area”***.

He also acknowledged the contributions of the International Development Partners (IDPs) who provided funds for the statistical development of the Region.

“Use me as an Advocate for Statistics” were the words of the Prime Minister, Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith C. Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada as he concluded the keynote address. A request was also made for him to champion the cause for statistics and statisticians at the highest level of the Community with the same verve and vigour that he had infused in leading the Community in the area of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

The Forum continued with discussions which were held under four panels (*session two—session five*).

- **Session Two:** The High-Level Panel: Policy Context - Investing in Statistics by Governments;
- **Session Three:** The Statisticians' Panel: The Status of Statistics: Challenges/Gaps, Strategy, Initiatives, Results Achieved and Best Practices;
- **Session Four:** Partnerships' Panel: The Development of Statistics: Meaning of the Data Revolution in CARICOM SIDS; and

(Continued in column 2)

2nd HIGH LEVEL FORUM ON STATISTICS

(Continued from column 1)

- **Session Five:** Mixed Panel: The Way Forward. The following presents a summary of each panel discussion:

Session Two: The High-Level Panel: Policy Context - Investing in Statistics by Governments

This panel was chaired by Professor Jacob Opadeyi, Vice Chancellor and Principal of the University of Guyana. The following presentations were made: ***“The Importance of Statistics in Making Policy Decisions”*** by the Honourable Oliver Joseph, Minister of Economic Development, Planning, Trade, Energy and Cooperatives, Grenada; ***“Government Investment in Suriname's Statistical System”*** presented by Ms. Dayenne Wielingen, Deputy Chair of the Board, General Bureau of Statistics, Suriname; ***“The Future of Statistics: The Case of Trinidad and Tobago”*** presented by Ms. Arlene McComie, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, Trinidad and Tobago; and ***“Why Social Policy Development requires an Investment in Statistics: The Case of Anguilla”*** presented by Dr. Bonnie Richardson-Lake, Permanent Secretary, Health and Social Development, Ministry of Social Development, Anguilla.

Some of the main decisions emanating from this panel were as follows: Policy-making is a fundamental function of Governments and is required, *inter alia*, sound evidence, in which the core is good statistics. It was recommended that policy/decision-making must be evidence driven, and Governments should play a critical role in the development of the NSOs/ NSS by equipping them with the necessary tools and resources to enable the production of the required statistics.

Session Three: The Statisticians' Panel: The Status of Statistics: Challenges/Gaps, Strategy, Initiatives, Results Achieved and Best Practices

This panel was chaired by: Mr. Eric Rancourt, Director, International Cooperation Division, Statistics Canada. The session commenced with a video presentation entitled ***“Serving Canadians: The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics”***, by Mr. Eric Rancourt, Statistics Canada. Mr. Rancourt also made a presentation on the ***“New Guidelines for the National***

(Continued on page 4 column 1)

2nd HIGH LEVEL ADVOCACY FORUM ON STATISTICS

(Continued from page 4 column 2)

Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). Additional presentations include - ***“The Need For a Strategic Approach to Statistical Development in Grenada: The Way Forward”*** by Mr. Halim Brizan, Director, Central Statistical Office, Grenada; ***“Response to the Challenges Facing the National Statistics Office: The Jamaican Experience”***, presented by Ms. Carol Coy, Director-General Statistical Institute of Jamaica and ***“Strengthening Statistics in a Small Island State: The Case of Anguilla”***, by Ms. Lori-Rae Alleyne-Franklin, Chief Statistician, Anguilla Statistics Department.

Session 4: Partnerships’ Panel: The Development of Statistics: Meaning of the Data Revolution in CARICOM Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

This panel was chaired by Mr. Dave Clement, Former Director of Statistics, Central Statistical Office, Trinidad and Tobago, and focused on *the Development of Statistics: Meaning of the Data Revolution in CARICOM SIDS*. Presentations were made as follows: ***“Developing Statistics in CARICOM: From Strengthening the National Statistical Systems (NSS) to Data Revolution”*** by Ms. El Iza Mohamedou, Deputy Secretariat Manager, PARIS21 Secretariat; ***“Better Data for Decision-Making through a Data Revolution”*** by Mr. Michael Morris, Results Adviser, Caribbean Development Bank (CDB); ***“Multi-dimensional Poverty Measurement: Confronting Complexity Through a Data Revolution”*** by Mr. Crispin Gregoire, Chief for the Caribbean, Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); ***“Support to the Development of Statistics in CARICOM: The Case of the ILO”*** by Mr. Reynold Simons, Senior Specialist, Employment and Labour Market Policies, International Labour Organisation (ILO); ***“Building CARICOM Statistics for Knowledge Societies: Projects and Activities of UNESCO”*** by Mr. Hendrik van der Pol, Director, Institute of Statistics, and Mr. Hara Padhy, Adviser, Communication and Information, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO); ***“How Good (or Bad) are Economic Statistics in the Caribbean: A Comparative Study”*** by Mr. Marc Prud’Homme, Real Sector Statistical Adviser, Caribbean Regional Technical Assistance Centre (CARTAC) and ***“The Global***

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2nd HIGH LEVEL ADVOCACY FORUM ON STATISTICS

(Continued from column 1)

Strategy: Improving the Availability and Quality of Agricultural and Rural Statistics for the Caribbean Region by Ms. Veronica Boero, Regional Statistician, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Session 5: Mixed Panel: The Way Forward.

The final panel constituted a mixed panel and dealt with *“The Way Forward”*. It was chaired by Ms. Sonia Jackson, Former Director-General of Statistics, Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN). This session commenced by highlighting key issues raised in the previous sessions and included the following: Statistics must reflect the voice of the people empowering them to make government and other stakeholders accountable, and must be appropriate and based on accurate data; Regionalisation of statistics must take place to avoid the use of duplication and to make use of limited resources and where the resources are limited, every development dollar must count. Policy; The Regional Statistical Work Programme (RSWP) should be the basis for the alignment of the work at the national level; and the need for professionalisation of the entire National Statistical System (NSS).

The 14th Meeting of the Advisory Group on Statistics (14th AGS), Grenada—29th May 2014.

The Fourteenth Meeting of the Advisory Group on Statistics (14th AGS) was held on 29th May 2014 in St. George’s Grenada under the theme ***“Working Together to Improve Statistics in the 21st Century and Beyond”***. The main objective of this Meeting was to introduce the new membership, examine the current status of work and to decide the way forward.

The members present at that meeting were Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. Belize and Bermuda were absent. The new members were Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, but the Trinidad and Tobago Representative attended the meeting for the first time.

(Continued on page 5 column 1)

Continued from page 4 column 2)

Being the inaugural meeting, it provided members with information regarding the history and fundamentals of its operation. It was noted that the origin of the AGS dated back to a CARICOM/UNSD project that was executed in the Region around 1999 to 2004. At the end of this project a CARICOM Advisory Group on Social/Gender and The Environment

Statistics and Indicators was set up, to sustain the development of this area of statistics post the project. In 2005, with the approval of the RSWP by the Community Council of Ministers, the process of implementation was to form an Advisory Group. The existing Advisory Group on Social/Gender Statistics was transformed to undertake this activity. The AGS presents all decisions to the SCCS who endorses same.

The Terms of Reference of the AGS was also recently revised. As it related to the roles and responsibility of the AGS, Suriname was elected as the Chairman of the AGS; Saint Lucia was elected as the Deputy Chairperson and Barbados was elected as the Rapporteur. The Rapporteur will present the Summary of Recommendations and Conclusions of the AGS Meetings to the SCCS Meeting for endorsement.

An overview of the work done by the AGS was also conducted. The work done, results achieved, current status and challenges were presented to the new AGS. A programme of work was done and duties assigned to the new membership. The group will meet again in October 2014.

CARIBBEAN POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS SYMPOSIUM,

The **Census Symposium** provided a forum to discuss the current status of countries on the 2010 round of the Population and Housing Census, the major challenges/best practices and key considerations for the 2020 Census. The Symposium targeted Directors of Statistics and the main officers who assisted with the conduct of the Census. Representatives from regional and international organisations were also invited. The key goal of the symposium was to prepare recommend

Continued in column 2)

(Continued from column 1)

ations arising out of the deliberations that would lead to the outlining of a strategy and approaches for the 2020 Round of Censuses. The deliberations at the symposium centered around the following areas:-

- the effectiveness of the training mechanisms;
- the state of preparedness of Census Maps;
- the content and length of the questionnaire;
- public education and sensitisation; and
- Dissemination and analysis of the results and the response to the Census.

Under each of these headings, there were key discussion points that arose during the meeting and these are documented in the following paragraphs.

The Effectiveness of the Training Mechanisms

The meeting noted some of the best practices in this area included the recruitment of more than the adequate amount of enumerators with experience of performing face to face interviews.

Some of the recommendations were:

- The training of interviewers continually instead only at the time of the census, also the provision of refresher courses closer to the census;
- An longer training period for enumerators; and
- Continuous training for staff of the CSOs/NSOs to elevate the skills of those persons in the use of the CSPro software and all areas related to data processing;

Member states also requested assistance from CARICOM or any other training groups for technical assistance in order to prepare future mid-year estimates.

The State of Preparedness of Census Maps.

The meeting noted that while census maps came from various sources, the primary source was the Lands and Surveys Unit, as a result it was therefore

Continued on page 6 column 1)

2nd HIGH LEVEL FORUM ON STATISTICS

(Continued from page 5 column 2)

highlighted that it was of critical importance for the appropriate staff to be in place for the mapping.

A major recommendation noted in this area was, the need to start mapping preparations approximately three to four years before the census year, so that the maps can be ready in advance. Challenges reported in this area included the lack of the necessary hardware to map certain areas such as informal settlements in remote areas and volatile areas.

Content and Length of the Questionnaire.

The challenges and best practices in the preparation of census questionnaires were also reported.

Some of the challenges included:

- The length of the questionnaires which resulted in respondent fatigue;
- The inclusion of questions based on Stakeholders' interest rather than the national interest; and
- Difficulty with certain sections such as migration and immigration regarding the flow of the questions resulting in the need to re-arranged questions in this section so that the 'skip' instruction could be clearly understood.

Some of the best practises identified included:

- Utilising those efforts of questionnaire design that proved useful in the preparation of questionnaires for 2010 Census and training enumerators in same;
- Early planning of consultations with stakeholders; and
- Determination of the content and length of the census questionnaire as early as possible.

The meeting noted the following recommendations in this area:

- Questionnaires should be as short as possible but at the same time they should include the core questions applicable to the CARICOM region to ensure comparability;
- The need for electronic data capture;
- The use of administrative sources should be explored in order to gather data, which will help to

(Continued in column 2)

2nd HIGH LEVEL FORUM ON STATISTICS

(Continued from column 1)

- reduce the number of questions in a census questionnaire.
- Countries should make an effort to conduct continuous labour force surveys so that the size of the questionnaire can be reduced by eliminating this section.

The meeting also expressed appreciation to the CARICOM Secretariat for assistance in designing census questionnaires for Member States as well as their gratefulness for the support received from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and Department for International Development (DIFID) in order to facilitate the use of a common framework approach to the 2010 round of censuses.

Public Education and Sensitisation.

During the meeting, the importance of the use of the media including radio, television and social media to publicise the census was highlighted. It was noted that these publicity activities helped in the reduction of non-responses to questionnaires. Member states identified some best practices used in their census publicity campaigns such as:

- Utilisation of public figures and personalities to inform and educate the public about specific activities being undertaken for the census;
- Early planning with various media houses; and
- Visitations to schools to distribute advertising materials—school children were found to be the best agents for publicising the census in the case of Saint Lucia.

Participants at the symposium were urged to not restrict their advocacy efforts for statistics to periods of surveys and censuses but to continue to advocate for statistics in all areas on a routine basis.

Dissemination and Analysis of the Results and the Responses to the Census.

The following Member States reported that they have published some form of census results either

(Continued on page 7 column 1)

(Continued from page 6 column 2)

in hardcopy or on their websites:- Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, Barbados, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

The meeting acknowledged the efforts made by most Member States in seeking to produce their census reports using the resources at the statistical offices rather than outsourcing to consultants and recommended that there should be a more advance course in Demography to further improve the analytical skills of the staff at the NSOs.

The meeting also recommended that in light of the CSME, comparative analysis of the census data should be done across Member States. During the meeting, several Member States requested support in the following areas:- census data analysis, population projections, revision of mid-year estimates from the 2000 round of census, life tables, Mapping and the GIS system, south-south cooperation assistance in the REDATAM application.

The meeting expressed appreciation to the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) for sponsoring the CARICOM/UWI training course in Demography during the 2005 to 2009 and to the UNFPA for the support to produce a forthcoming monograph on adolescence fertility for the 2010 Round of Census.

REGIONAL STATISTICAL SEMINAR

This Regional Statistical Seminar focused on contemporary issues and concerns in the production of official statistics. It served to foster the sharing of information and knowledge on new methodologies in statistics and on statistical techniques. Among the topics on the agenda of the seminar were: Poverty Measurement, Labour Force Estimation and other related issues. The seminar targeted Directors of Statistics and other personnel from National Statistical Offices as well as representatives from regional and international organisations. The following paragraphs presents a brief summary of the seminar topics.

(Continued in column 2)

(Continued from column 1)

POVERTY MEASUREMENT: ADVOCATING FOR MULTI- DIMENSIONAL POVERTY MEASUREMENT

In the first presentation under this topic entitled *Advocating for Multi- Dimensional Poverty Measurement*, the reasons for the upswing in multidimensional measures of poverty (and well-being) were categorised into three main types:-

- Technical- it is now possible to have these measures;
- Policy- countries and institutions have realised the value-added; and
- Political- there is a great demand for poverty issues.

The discussions under this topic revealed the key questions that needed to be addressed. It was agreed that income was a critical measure of poverty which should be incorporated in the multi-dimensional approach. It was also established that further work was required regarding the dimension, indicators and cut-off points which were being used for this multi-dimensional approach. At the same time, it was noted that many of the indicators which were currently required for this approach were being collected by countries in the Region.

Implementation of a Sustainable Data Collection Programme (SDP) for the Measurement of Living Standards in the OECS

The presentation highlighted the efforts of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Secretariat relative to the measurement of inequality and poverty in the OECS Region. It provided information on past initiatives related to this area, the programme that was being proposed and efforts that were being made to secure the funding required. It was highlighted that past initiatives, such as *Harmonisation of the OECS Labour Force Survey, training in data processing, course on Household Survey for countries*, funded mainly by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the World Bank, laid the foundation for the SDP.

(Continued on page 8 column 1)

2nd HIGH LEVEL FORUM ON STATISTICS

(Continued from page 7 column 2)

The proposed SDP would seek to address past limitations by improving the frequency of surveys, widening of the scope of the data being collected and the use of a more modern approach to poverty measurement.

The current survey programme proposed under the SDP was outlined as follows:

- Every ten years: Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS) + Household Budget Survey (HBS) plus Full Country Poverty Assessment (CPA);
- Every five years: LFS + extra questions + extra dimensions + consumption/food security (Light CPA/Survey of Living Conditions/LSMS);
- Every two-three years: LFS + extra questions + shortened consumption modules (poverty line would not be computed but would be upgraded. Same line for 10 years, just update when you have your welfare aggregate to calculate count);
- Every year: LFS + extra questions (Grenada's LFS Questionnaire and the Education Module from Saint Lucia to be used).

With respect to financing, the OECS Secretariat had been engaging with several development partners such as the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and Department for International Development (DFID) to seek funding to roll out the Programme. The CDB also indicated that the intention is to initiate similar work in other CARICOM Countries.

Approaches for Estimation under Labour Force Statistics — *Labour Force Surveys in the Caribbean: Recent Developments and Development Issues*

This presentation focused on the Labour Force Surveys done in the Caribbean, reviews/revisions and issues, developments in the OECS Region, use of LFS results, implications of the decisions of the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) and the next steps. It was noted that some countries could not conduct regular LFS due to their small size, limited capacity and insufficient invest

(Continued in column 2)

2nd HIGH LEVEL FORUM ON STATISTICS

(Continued from column 1)

ment in statistics. In terms of the ICLS decisions, it was explained that the ICLS has narrowed the scope of the employment definition and unemployment was now limited to only persons who were seeking income-generating work/ paid employment. Some of the recommendations coming out of this presentation included:-

- Use of data input technology in the LFS such as scanning, and hand-held computer-aided interviewing, GIS and mobile telephones;
- Simple averages can be used when annualizing quarterly data or to annualize at the level of the sample design which would require a master sample and annual estimates over a five year period;
- A regional task force could be established to oversee the implementation of the ICLS decisions.

Proposed Project for the Regional Advancement of Statistics in the Caribbean (PRASC)

The presentation provided a brief background on the genesis of this proposed project. A needs assessment was conducted by the CARICOM Secretariat and ECLAC and the project proposal was made to the international organization previously known as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), now called DFATD in 2012. It was noted that Statistics Canada was the executing agency for this project. The presentation informed on the components of this proposed project noting that it was yet to be funded, however work was in progress. The presenter highlighted that the expected results of this project were that there would be standardized concepts, methods and tools along with strengthened standards and classifications that would act as a foundation for the conduct of business surveys, household surveys and the business surveys to support the national accounts.

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