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CARIBBEAN STATISTICIANS

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**BACKGROUND AND UPDATE OF**  
**THE SOCIAL STATISTICAL DATABASES PROJECT**

**(Submitted by UNECLAC)**

Arising out of the preparations for the various United Nations conferences which were held in the mid-1990s such as: the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW), and the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD), governments in the Caribbean recognized the need for an improved quality of social statistics and analysis of data in order to better address the social conditions of their populations. It was not surprising, therefore, that in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action of the WSSD, 6-12 March 1995, member States would express commitment to "ensure that reliable statistics and statistical indicators are used to develop and assess social policies and programmes so that economic and social resources are used efficiently and effectively" (Commitment 9d).

In Commitment 10, member States called on regional commissions, in cooperation with regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations and banks, *inter alia* to "pursue such mechanisms and measures as are necessary and appropriate to assist governments in meeting their commitments".

In August 1999, the Social Development Unit, ECLAC/CDCC secretariat, formally submitted a project outline for the development of subregional social statistical databases and the construction of a methodology for the construction of a social vulnerability index, (SVI) for Dutch funding, through an ECLAC mechanism. Funds became available in January 2001. ECLAC wishes to take this opportunity to express its gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for its most gracious support of this project.

Over the last two years (2001-2002), the ECLAC/CDCC project had accomplished its objective, which was the establishment of fully searchable databases. This was done in collaboration with the NSOs and regional institutions such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, and the University of the West Indies (UWI). The databases include Surveys of Living Conditions, Population Census Data, and Labour Force Data, as detailed in Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 below.

Table 1

Survey of Living Conditions

Country	Year(s)	Format
Barbados	1996-97	Summary tables (excel)
Belize	1995	IMPS
Grenada	1999	DBF
Guyana	1994	SPSS
Jamaica	1990-1999	SPSS/SAS
Puerto Rico	1999-2000	Summary tables (excel)
St. Kitts and Nevis	2001	SPSS
Saint Lucia	1995	SPSS
Saint Vincent & the Grenadines	1995	SPSS

Source: ECLAC/CDCC Report LC/CAR/G.702, 22 October 2002

Table 2

Labour Force Survey

Country	Year(s)	Format
Belize	1993-1999	IMPS
Saint Lucia	1994-2000	SPSS

Source: ECLAC/CDCC Report LC/CAR/G.702, 22 October 2002

Table 3

1990/1991 Population Census

Country	Format	Country	Format
Antigua	IMPS	Jamaica	IMPS
Bahamas	IMPS	Montserrat	IMPS
Barbados	IMPS	Puerto Rico	Summary tables - excel
Belize	IMPS	St. Kitts and Nevis	IMPS
British Virgin Islands	IMPS	Saint Lucia*	IMPS
Dominica	IMPS	Saint Vincent & the Grenadines	IMPS
Grenada	IMPS	Trinidad and Tobago	IMPS
Guyana	IMPS		

Source: ECLAC/CDCC Report LC/CAR/G.702, 22 October 2002

Table 4

2000/2001 Population Census

Country	Format
Bahamas	Data files in ASCII format
Barbados	SPSS
Belize	IMPS
Netherlands Antilles	HTML files
Saint Lucia	SPSS

Source: ECLAC/CDCC database

Governments that have completed the 2000/1 round of the population and housing census have agreed in principle to deposit same with the database and have begun to do so. To date the databases hold the 2000/1 population and housing census for Belize, the Bahamas, Barbados and Saint Lucia. Census data has also been received from the Netherlands Antilles.

Administrative arrangements are being made for the Project to access existing data that can be found in other databases such as those held by the Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC), the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and the United Nations Educational,

Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The databases collected by the Project are to be mirrored in two other locations: the CARICOM Secretariat and the Derek Gordon Data Bank, UWI, Jamaica.

In the near future researchers will be able to query the databases via a web interface, subject to the process put in place for approval granted by the NSOs. The first phase of the work is underway to enable this process.

The process of data collection continues and through the series of technical meetings, which have been held, data comparability and quality issues have been brought to the attention of the data managers at the national level, for their remedy. The development of a metadata dictionary is near completion and will be available to the users of the databases. Maintenance and continuous updating of the databases is a continuous process.

Apart from the collection and harmonization of the data sets, the ECLAC/CDCC Project contains a training component and, to date, 45 persons from 20 member and associate member States have been trained. These were social planners, social policy analysts and statisticians with responsibility for socio-demographic data. The training had as its objective the enhancement of the skills of senior technocrats in the field of social development in evidence-based social policy formulation and the workings of the Caribbean social statistical databases.

The other significant component of the Project, which was the development of a methodological approach for a Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), is well on its way. The lead consultant's paper on the methodology has been completed and has undergone peer review. Scholars, who have been engaged in the development of other vulnerability indices, environmental and economical, have perused the ECLAC/CDCC document and submitted encouraging responses. An expert group meeting was held on July 24, 2003 in Port of Spain to arrive at consensus on the best construction of the methodology. It is expected that a manual, will be developed for the construction of the SVI and testing in a number of Caribbean SIDS will begin in the first quarter of the new year. All publications regarding these developments are expected to be published and widely disseminated before the end of the year.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper has not been officially edited by the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters of the Caribbean.

