

**TWENTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE  
STANDING COMMITTEE OF  
CARIBBEAN STATISTICIANS**

**RESTRICTED**

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**EFFORTS AT COORDINATING STATISTICS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL – THE  
CASE OF SOCIAL STATISTICS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**I. Introduction**

Lessons learnt from several experiences related to the implementation of statistical projects in the Region point to the need to involve all stakeholders in the process, and to promote maximum cooperation and collaboration among all players. It must be recognised and accepted that gone are the days when statistical organisations could 'go it alone' with little or no involvement of other departments or organisations. In the current millennium, the achievement of any desirable statistical goal requires a teamwork approach involving both users and producers of the various statistical products. Indeed, the statistical organisations will remain 'in the drivers seat' but these organisations have to accept and encourage the active participation and contribution of other stakeholders.

**II. The CARICOM Programme on Social/Gender Statistics**

- (i) The CARICOM Programme on Social/Gender Statistics seeks to strengthen capacity in the compilation of Social/Gender Statistics and Indicators in the CARICOM Region. As a consequence of this capacity building effort, the programme will assist Member States to institutionalise the production of Social and Gender Statistics in their National Statistical Systems in order to inform policy formulation, that can improve the conditions of men and women. The activities of the programme are complementary to efforts by other agencies in the area of social statistics and it adopts a strategy, which encourages maximum collaboration and cooperation between the various stakeholders at the national

level. It also encourages collaboration and cooperation between implementing agencies, in order to maximise the benefits to the sub-region.

- (ii) Currently, in all Member States of the Caribbean Community, the production of social data is generated by a variety of national agencies. For example, in all Member States, education data and statistics are collected and compiled by the education authorities. So also are the countries' health data. The housing authorities in a few of these countries are also producing their housing statistics, and recently, many Member States have taken on projects which seek to strengthen capabilities of the departments of labour to collect and compile labour market statistics and indicators. Obviously, therefore, the National Statistical Organisations (NSO) are not directly involved in the collection of all social data and the subsequent generation of all social statistics and indicators, even though statistical expertise often exist mainly at the NSO. It is therefore, not uncommon from time to time, to learn of two different national rates for a particular indicator, in circulation at the same time.
- (iii) However, even though the NSO may not be directly involved in the collection and compilation, some of the key social data and statistics, because they often have much greater statistical expertise than personnel working at the social sector ministries, close cooperation and collaboration between these social agencies and the NSO on statistical matters and policy related issues are essential, in order to enhance efficient policy formulation and implementation.
- (iv) In order to foster cooperation and collaboration, the CARICOM programme on social/gender statistics has been encouraging and assisting Member States to work more closely together in teams, through the establishing of Social Indicators and Millennium Development Goals (SIMDG) committees at the national level. This has been one of the hallmarks of this current component of the programme.
- (v) SIMDG Committees, when appropriately staffed and reasonably resourced can provide an efficient vehicle for the production of social indicators and statistics on a timely and reliable basis. Such committees are also best placed to monitor developments with respect to set targets and goals. Hence, these committees are crucial in monitoring and assessing the achievements of targets and goals set by countries under the umbrella of the MDG.
- (vi) Establishing the above named committees, bring together both the main producers of data as well as some of the main users. Therefore, all of the relevant stakeholders are represented on the committees and the potential of this team far surpasses that of any single agency and will thus greatly enhance the production of the social indicators in a timely fashion. Placing users and producers of data side by side on the committee, will also enhance the process of policy formulation and implementation. In particular, since the committee will be in this privileged position, it will also be able to monitor the MDG indicators, which are already included in the set of social indicators that the committee will

generate. The committee will therefore be in a strategic position to assist in the assessment of progress towards the achievement of the MDG. The full involvement of all stakeholders on these committees is, therefore crucial to the success of the programme.

### **III. The Major Objectives of the SIMDG committees**

- (i) Currently, one of the major thrusts of the CARICOM Secretariat is to establish a core data set for the Region. This was the major rationale for the current CARICOM Social and Gender Statistics Programme, in the area of social statistics. It is envisaged that this committee will play a key role in enhancing some of the major attributes of this core data set, such as data relevance and harmonisation at the national level. The CARICOM Secretariat is therefore, playing a leading role in establishing these committees, which will play a key role in capacity building in the area of social and gender statistics.
- (ii) Next, the SIMDG Committee will make recommendations to the organisations responsible for data collection on how to standardise and improve the quality of data, and will coordinate training for the participating organisations. Since these organisations will be fully represented on the committee, the adoption and implementation of these recommendations will be smooth and prompt.
- (iii) Thirdly, the committee will gradually expand the list of indicators and promote data collection in order to improve the information on new areas of concern. This will be very important since the rapid social transformations taking place, will demand the expansion of the list of indicators on a continuous basis. This again further accentuates the need for the committee to meet on a regular basis and for special consideration to be given on the meeting's agenda to discuss recent developments in the social sector.
- (iv) Fourth, the committee will collate, compile and publish the indicators in document form. The statistical data will be accompanied by explanatory narrative summaries, and will reflect commitments to targets and make recommendations for future action. As such, the committee will impact crucially on the Millennium Development Assessment Reports, which will reflect the achievement of the MDG.
- (v) Fifth, on an annual basis, the committee will be charged with the wide dissemination of the document containing the analysis.
- (vi) Finally, the SIMDG committees will monitor the quality of data being used by local and international organisations and make recommendations on action to be taken based on these findings.

#### **IV. Expected Outputs of the Programme**

- (i) First, on an annual basis, the committee will be best placed to recommend priority actions for improving data collection systems in the field of social statistics. The fact that one of the committee's key concerns is to do with the quality of data generated, the team of professionals participating on the committee in their deliberations prior to the release of the indicators will be able to identify weaknesses in the data collection systems, and therefore recommend remedial action. As a team of users and producers, they will also be more able to mobilise resources for such action.
- (ii) Next, the committee will steer the annual publication of a list of selected social indicators, and some basic analyses of these indicators. The analytical reports will greatly complement the MDG assessment reports, which will eventually be done, on an annual basis, for all countries of the community. Hence, the committee's role will be crucial in assessing social policy developments.
- (iii) Thirdly, the committee will make recommendations on an annual basis, on priority actions to be taken based on findings and analysis of the selected indicators. Since some members of the committee will also be policy advisers, it will be much easier for the efforts of the committee to impact on policy issues. Because of the good representation of policy personnel on the committee, this will help to assure that the planners and policy makers receive the annual recommendations on priority actions to be taken based on findings and analysis of the selected indicators. The activities of the committee will produce a cadre of trained personnel in all participating organizations.
- (iv) Finally, the committee will conduct workshops and meetings for nationwide public dissemination of data. It is crucial that quick action be taken to disseminate the outputs of the committee. This will maximise the usefulness of the committee's efforts, and will, in addition, strengthen their credibility and attract resources to sustain its work.

#### **V. Conclusion**

- (i) There is no doubt that In order to enhance the process of institutionalising the production of social statistics, a committee as described above will be extremely helpful. Hence, now that a committee has been established in all Member States except Haiti, the urgent task is for the committee to start to function effectively. A continuing part of the CARICOM Secretariat's role is to monitor and coordinate this.

- (ii) However, for the committee to effectively function, there has to be a strong national commitment. This commitment will have to transcend all ministerial and departmental borders and barriers, and all stakeholders must focus on the benefits that a comprehensive social statistics programme will yield for the entire population.
- (iii) The close involvement of all appropriate international agencies in supporting the SIMDG Committees and the entire programme will also be essential to the entire process. It is important therefore, that both at the national and regional levels, cooperation and collaboration be fostered and sustained. The work of these agencies will have to be dovetailed into the programme. However, since the objectives of the work programme of these agencies are very close to those of the programme, this will be very easy to achieve. Yet, it should be carefully monitored to ensure that it does.

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