

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

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**PROPOSED COLLABORATION BETWEEN CARICOM SECRETARIAT AND
THE UNSD IN THE COMPILATION OF INFORMATION FOR THE
DEMOGRAPHIC YEARBOOK**

1. Introduction

All Directors of Statistical Offices of the Region are quite familiar with the UNSD's Annual Demographic Yearbook (DYB) and the questionnaires that are used to put this publication together. Especially for small offices like ours in the Region, the instrument for collecting demographic and social data can be quite overwhelming. However, at a recent review of the DYB, the UNSD reported that this flagship publication is one of the most used publications of all released by the UNSD. It is crucial therefore, that attempts are made to increase the response rate. In an effort to do this, the review made several recommendations to both the format and content of the DYB. The UNSD is currently implementing these recommendations.

The Regional Response to the DYB

Even though a formal inventory has not yet been carried out, it is known that most Member States of the Region do respond to the questionnaires of the DYB

as far as the available data permit. Member States are also being asked to complete and return requests for social data and indicators under the CARICOM programme. If the requested information is the same, it would be undesirable for them to send the same information to the two agencies. Surely a smooth arrangement can be worked out such that Member States send the data only to the regional agency which can then distribute this globally. However, while there are common areas of data collection for both the DYB and the CARICOM Programme (population, live births, deaths and infant deaths), it must be noted that the level of details required for the DYB, is much more demanding. While the CARICOM Programme might be collecting a particular statistic that is required for the DYB, for example, live births by sex, the level of details required for the DYB questionnaire for this particular indicator is by all the following variables:

- month;
- legitimacy status;
- live-birth order;
- born in wedlock by duration of marriage;
- age of mother and sex of child;
- born in wedlock by age of mother and sex of child;
- age of father;
- born in wedlock by age of father;
- age of mother and live birth order;
- birth-weight;
- gestational age; and
- type of birth.

This situation, which also applies to data on adult and infant deaths, would make the joint collaborative efforts and data sharing very difficult. In fact, presently, it is not even clear if Member States are compiling these indicators at this level of detail.

The Need for Capacity Building within Member States

Ideally, rather than requesting data at the Member States level, it would be much more efficient if the requests can be addressed at the regional level. In fact, this is the ultimate plan with respect to all branches of statistics, since this is a much more cost effective and efficient approach. Currently, the Trade Statistics may be the only set of statistics that have reached this level. Once this capacity is built at the regional level, the Secretariat becomes a one-stop repository of all Member States' statistics and the user can therefore more easily gather whatever is required at one central location rather than have to make requests to individual countries.

For us to operate at this more efficient level however, there is need for significant improvements in Member States' capacity to generate the required statistics at the national level, in the first place. Currently, considerable gaps and deficiencies remain in Member States' capacity to collect and compile many of the key social statistics that are often required by users. Therefore, for the success of any meaningful collaboration to fulfill the requirements of the DYB, of urgent priority is the need to fully develop the capacities of the various Member States. In fact, even if the status quo continues, without enhancing the capacity of Member States, there will always be large gaps in the data supplied by Member States for use in the DYB.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, there is need for the UNSD to conduct its own internal review/revision of the DYB questionnaire. Based on the conclusions of the DYB meeting, this process has evidently commenced. An approach to collaborate with the Region can comprise the following:

- (i) There is need to look closely at the CARICOM Region not only at the overall response to the DYB questionnaire, but also the responses for the individual sections and variables within the questionnaire;
- (ii) Based on the initial exploratory work to establish areas of commonality between the CARICOM Programme and the DYB, there is further need to evaluate the gap that exists between both programmes in order to assess if there are efficiency gains or alleviation of respondents burden from utilization of a joint approach;
- (iii) There is need to ascertain whether the additional details that form the gap between the CARICOM Programme and the DYB are being collected in Member States, the sources of that data and info on the metadata;
- (iv) An enhancement of the capacity building required at the national level will be vital.

Obviously, sometimes requests for data that are simply not available will not tend to demand results, the Secretariat through its CARICOM Programme has worked in outreach programmes in Member States aided by the UNSD/CARICOM Project and by the and World Bank and

The CARICOM Programme is focusing on building capacity through facilitating greater outer agency coordination in Social Activities. Once an appropriate examination of the DYB process can be undertaken in the Region, the Secretariat stands ready to support the collaborative trust.
