

## Strategies For The Development Of the National Statistical Systems

### - The Jamaican Experience

#### Background

The Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) began to look at its operations from a strategic standpoint in 2001. The process required us to do a SWOT analysis, thereby examining our strengths, our weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This process culminated with the documentation of the strategic plan – *“The Modernization of STATIN – A Strategic Plan”*.

The modernization plan was subject to scrutiny and analysis in 2002 by an IMF Consultant, David Allen, who endorsed the general direction of the plan but raised concerns about data quality and pointed to strengthening of the legal framework. The findings of the Allen review were:

- That the fines for penalties be increased and be the subject of Regulations made pursuant to Ministerial Order to allow for periodic review
- The Act should specifically state the data are collected for statistical purposes only and that they cannot be released to any other agency of Govt.
- The Act should specifically provide for access to information from official agencies
- The Act provides that STATIN promotes and develops integrated statistics but more specific powers are required to provide for STATIN to develop and maintain a coordinated national statistical programme. Item 67 recommends the establishment of the statistics advisory council with *“broad based membership capable of providing advice to STATIN and to the Minister on the improvement and coordination of statistical services and on statistical needs, priorities and work programmes.”*

The Foreign Investment Advisory Service, Strengthening the Collection of Foreign Investment Statistics in Jamaica, 1997 also pointed to review of the Act and the lack of coordination among the Agencies responsible for the collection of data. The findings of the FIAS review in 1997 were:

- “The Act contains all the necessary basic provisions to achieve the purpose for which it was enacted.....”
- Some weaknesses in the Act were identified:
  - i. Section 3:2(b) defects the purpose for which the Act was established
  - ii. The lack of a provision expressly specifying the use to which data may be put
  - iii. The monetary penalties are outdated

#### The National Statistics System in Jamaica

The national statistics system (NSS) comprises the totality of **all** the units of government engaged in producing official statistical data. The ultimate objective, therefore, of the NSS is to provide a comprehensive consistent and timely data coverage of the economic, social and environmental state of the country.

The statistical system in Jamaica comprises of STATIN, the national statistics office and all the Ministries, Departments and Agencies that provide Official Statistics. Some of which are - Bank of Jamaica, PIOJ, the Ministries of Finance & Planning, Education, Health, Security & Justice, etc.

Each agency has developed its own operating procedures and there is no coordination at the national level. National priorities for information are not established through a joint process. In addition there are no standards that prevail throughout the system. The need for coordination at the national level was recently recognised, with Cabinet approving the establishment of a Commission on Vital Statistics with a life of 5 years and chaired by the Financial Secretary, in order to address the concerns and improve the quality of the statistical information in this area.

The Statistics Act covers the work of STATIN, only, and not the other producers of statistical information within the system.

### **The Statistics Act**

The Statistics Act is an “old” piece of legislation, having been promulgated in 1946, since then some minor amendments have been made but its substance has not been altered. The Act provides the bases for the work of STATIN and fair protection to the Institute in its operations but it does not reflect coverage of the current statistical system that has evolved over the years.

Some other weaknesses identified with the legislation in its present form:

- a. the supremacy of the Act has been challenged by Institutions
- b. the penalties for breaches under the Act are outdated and are written into the Act itself and not as a Regulation
- c. the Act does not specifically state that the data, collected by STATIN, is to be used for statistical purposes only
- d. the Act refers to STATIN as having the authority to “generally” promote and develop a system to coordinate statistics but it stops short in defining the mechanism.

The review of the legislation is therefore timely. Simultaneously, the other pieces of legislation that impact upon the work of the Institute and the collection and production of statistics in general, needs to be examined and recommendations made for their review, particularly as the change in the system of national accounts from the 1968 model to the 1993 requires a change in reporting procedures for some areas of economic data.

### **The Review of the Statistics Act**

The review of the Statistics Act is being led by STATIN and the revised statute will be a modern statistics act that will support the work of the national statistics system while not reducing the role and responsibility of STATIN. The process will follow the channel used for the amendment of other legislation. Some specific activities are listed here:

1. The appointment of a legal consultant, with knowledge and experience in legal drafting and administrative matters to prepare the Green Paper
2. The preparation of a Green Paper that examines the issues in the legal framework pertaining to the operations of the Institute
3. The submission of the Green Paper to The Minister of Finance for his comments, etc. and approval

4. The tabling of the Green Paper in Cabinet for review by the Ministers of Cabinet
5. Consultations with major stakeholders
6. Consultations with the public
7. Review of the Green Paper to take account of the views and comments obtained from the consultations
8. Preparation of the White Paper for submission to Cabinet and Parliament
9. Submission to the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel for the preparation of the new legislation.

### **The Road Map**

The consultative process of obtaining the views and comments of the major stakeholders will be the start of the Road Map process and will be used to drive the change in the National Statistics System for Jamaica. The draft Road map is attached.

At the end of 24 months, the recommended period, there should be

- Consensus on the format and structure of the coordinating mechanism as well as its role and responsibilities
- A submission to the Chief Parliamentary Counsel for the drafting of the revised legislation

### **PARIS 21 Model**

The PARIS 21 presentation, National Strategies for Statistical Development (NSSD) is attached for easy reference and guidance.

Sonia M. Jackson  
Statistical Institute of Jamaica  
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