

FOURTEENTH MEETING OF THE

RESTRICTED

REGIONAL CENSUS COORDINATING

COMMITTEE

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**REPORT ON THE FIRST REGIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS TRAINING
COURSE – UWI, ST. AUGUSTINE, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO,
3 JULY TO 11 AUGUST 2006**

I. The Objectives of the Course/Workshop

The major objectives of the training course can be summarised as follows:

- (i) Because of the perceived gaps in the area of demographic analysis in the Region, it is expected that through this six week course, capacity in this area will be significantly enhanced. The course seeks to train, at the intermediate level, a minimum of eighteen (18) members of staff from the various statistical offices of the Region. This training will focus on analysis of demographic data, but will also examine the various data collection techniques and sources of demographic data;

- (ii) A secondary objective of the course is the provision of a solid background in the field of Demographic Analysis at the intermediate level. This would be an asset to successful participants seeking to pursue more advanced studies in this area.

II. The Planning Stage

Real planning for the course started at a “Progress Review” Meeting held in Kingston, Jamaica in December 2005. Two Census Data Analysis Consultants (CDAC), the CARICOM Census Coordinator (CCC) and an assistant from the Statistics section of the CARICOM Secretariat attended this Meeting, which focused on both the format and content or coverage of the course. It was agreed that Dr. Godfrey St. Bernard, acting Head of the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES), and Census Data Analysis Consultant would explore the possibility of using the facilities at SALISES, UWI at the St. Augustine campus as the venue for the course. All participants would be accommodated at one of the halls of residence on campus, and remain in Trinidad and Tobago for the duration of the course. The course would last for six weeks. In terms of the course’s contents, the broad areas to be included were agreed and the consultant undertook to work out the details for these topics.

In an attempt to compile a comprehensive list of relevant topics, the CCC enquired whether the Directors of Statistics wished to make an input in this process. Unfortunately, this inquiry did not receive a positive response. As a result, a set of possible topics was then put together by the CDAC, Professor Chukwudum Uche, and circulated to the Directors asking for comment. Again, the responses were received from only three (3) Directors, and the suggested presented did not significantly affect the original list of possible topics.

In the planning stage, outsourcing the training of writers to a consultant was contemplated. However, in the spirit of cooperation and collaboration, the CCC decided to co-opt teaching assistance from colleagues at the Santiago and Port of Spain offices. Santiago, with funding from the UNFPA (Jamaica), agreed to send one of their officers to teach the module on Estimates and Projections. Another officer of UNECLAC (Port of Spain), lectured on Mortality and Migration. The CCC also wanted the CARICOM Secretariat to be more visibly involved in the entire process. Therefore, the CCC and another qualified officer from the Secretariat also lectured on three of the ten (10) modules, namely, ‘The Sources of Demographic Data’, ‘Evaluating the Quality of Demographic Data’ and ‘Mortality’.

Detailed planning for the course did not fully materialize until mid-June. After repeated requests by the CCC for assistance, three members of the CARICOM Secretariat Statistics Section were ultimately deployed to assist with the details of planning for the implementation of the course. The contribution of these personnel was tremendous in making the course a success.

III. The Implementation Phase

a. Reorganizing the Project Activities

At the very early stages, on assuming full responsibility for the project, the CCC reorganised these activities without amending the substance of the activities of the project, and, in addition to the preparation of revised budgets for all other activities, a budget for the Demographic Analysis course was prepared and submitted to the RMTA. This budget was subsequently approved. It should be noted that although the original project did call for a workshop on Demographic Analysis, the intention was to focus on training the writers of the National Census Reports over a one-week period to prepare these analytical reports. Unfortunately, in order to successfully train practicing statistical personnel to effectively function as support staff at the intermediate level in this highly specialised area, a considerable amount of time was needed. Because of this inadvertent error at the initial stages of the project preparation, the CCC moved quickly to revise the activities to accommodate a six-week course.

b. Identifying and Recruiting appropriate Personnel

From the inception, it was acknowledged that in order to achieve the objectives of the course, it would be necessary to recruit consultants of a very high calibre who could deliver pedagogy and laboratory training in Demographic Analysis at the accepted international standard. With this in mind, the roster of the Region's professionals was analysed, and showed that the most outstanding professional currently working at the UWI campus in Mona, Jamaica was Professor Chuckuwudum Uche. Professor Uche was immediately contacted and he agreed to provide consultancy services and a contract was negotiated. The professor co-opted

the assistance of Dr. Godfrey St. Bernard, who was currently the acting Head of SALISES. Originally, the CCC proposed a scenario whereby the consultant would take on the activity in its entirety. This meant that all preparations of lessons, teaching, grading and the seeking of accreditation would be contracted out to the consultant and the Secretariat would only assist with the administration and management of the activity. The proposed fees for this, however, were exorbitant. At the same time, the CCC realized that this was a golden opportunity to promote cooperation and collaboration with some of the leading international agencies operating within the Region. Consequently, the CCC decided to seek assistance from CELADE and the UNECLAC in the teaching of some of the various topics that the consultant would identify as essential parts of the curriculum. Both funding agencies speedily and gladly agreed to provide assistance and the UNFPA provided the required funding to allow a Demographer/Lecturer from CELADE in Santiago, Chile to travel to Trinidad and Tobago for a week to teach the module on 'Population Estimates and Projections'. In addition, the Director of the UNECLAC sub-regional office in Port of Spain, agreed that the Demographer assigned to Population and Development at the Port of Spain sub-regional office of the UNECLAC would assist with lecturing. She was assigned to teach aspects of the 'Mortality' module as well as the entire module on 'Migration'. The CCC also realized that CARICOM should be more visible in the entire conduct of the regional training course and on a pro bono basis, he offered to teach two (2) of the ten (10) modules, namely 'Sources of Demographic Data' and 'Evaluation of Demographic Data'. Finally, the former Senior Project Officer of the Statistics Section of the CARICOM Secretariat was also co-opted to teach a part of the 'Mortality' module. In addition to enriching the entire process, these arrangements reduced the consultancy fees by over one third of the original amount. There was no doubt that the lecturers were of a very high professional calibre, and the resultant training met international standards.

c. The Venue

SALISES, St. Augustine Campus, UWI, was selected as the venue for the six-week training course for various reasons. Historically, the first course on Demographic Analysis was held at the Campus in 1983. This course was coordinated by the UNECLAC sub-regional office in Port of Spain. Leading Demographers from around

the world were gathered to teach various modules of the course. Participants were also privileged to have Professor William Brass, often referred to as the 'Father of Demography', as a lecturer for a week. He lectured mainly on the indirect techniques that he developed to measure Mortality and Fertility when data were either defective or non-existent. It should be noted that this course produced some of the leading Demographers of the Region, including the CCC and one of the lead persons who lectured at the regional course.

Like the other two (2) campuses of the UWI, SALISES is equipped with reasonably modern facilities, such as computer laboratories, with easy access to most of the common software as well as the Internet. These facilities are considered necessary in the modern age when most of the major Demographic techniques are computerised. In this regard, the provision of laptop computers would have enhanced the interest and productivity of students. However, due to lack of funding, laptops could not be procured for this first course. As a consequence, the desk tops in the laboratory were used and special laboratory sessions were scheduled for the participants. Additionally, SALISES was chosen as the venue due to the fact that this Member State is strategically located to accommodate regional courses such as these and it proved much more cost-effective for participants from across the CARICOM Region. Efforts were made to select accommodation on campus for all participants, but unfortunately these efforts were fruitless. In the end, the participants inhabited the hall of residence for medical students, which is located a little distance away from the lecture halls. This initially presented a few problems with transportation, but these problems were swiftly and amicably resolved. In addition, there were some complaints about the condition of the 'dorms' at this hall of residence but after consultation with the authorities this was also expeditiously resolved and the participants were able to live in a more sanitary and comfortable environment. The University's campus provided an array of possibilities for daily meals and participants thus averted the need to cook for themselves.

d. The Curriculum

One of the main terms of reference of the consultant was to compile an appropriate curriculum to meet the stated objectives. Hence, an array of topics were selected

and the depth to which each was taught had to be decided. Well before the course commenced, the consultant circulated a set of topics that were reviewed by several of the stakeholders, including the Directors of Statistics of the Region.

After a reasonable period for circulation and feedback, the consultant was able to finalize the curriculum, resulting in the following ten modules were agreed:

- (i) Sources of Demographic Data;
- (ii) Assessing the Quality of Demographic Data;
- (iii) Demographic Theories;
- (iv) Fertility Measures;
- (v) Nuptiality Measures;
- (vi) Mortality Measures;
- (vii) Stable Populations and Model Life Tables;
- (viii) Migration Measures;
- (ix) Indirect Techniques of Estimation;
- (x) Population Estimates and Projections.

For topics (i) to (ix), the depth of the level of instruction may be described as intermediate, but due to time constraints, the last topic on Estimates and Projections could merely be introduced. However, the depth and intensity of this course should be noted, and a full course could be designed to focus solely on this module. Participants were taught the theories but a generous number of practical sessions were arranged both within the classroom and in laboratory sessions. Participants learned of the techniques of data collection, compiling the various demographic measures and rates but also the analysis and interpretation of these results. All participants were empowered to collect data through surveys, censuses and administrative systems, ensuring a high level of results. In addition, they were equipped to compile and to reasonably analyse the data collected and to interpret the results. Student assessment was based on module assignments and 2 three-hour written examinations.

e. The Participants

Eighteen Member States and Associate Members of the Caribbean Community participated in the Census 2000 Analysis sub-project. This sub-project forms part of the wider Caribbean Capacity Development Programme (CCDP), which is being funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Each of these 18 Member States were invited to send one participant to the six-week course, provided that their participant had a minimum of CXC General Mathematics and had worked in the area of Social and/or Demographic statistics for at least a year. Of the eighteen Member States participating in the CCDP project, all eighteen responded positively but ultimately only sixteen Member States participated. Regrettably, the British Virgin Islands and Montserrat were unable to participate in the six-week course.

Participants' qualifications ranged from secondary school certificate passes in CXC Mathematics and other CXC subjects to Master's Degree level. Participants were assessed by their class assignments and by their performance on 2 three-hour written examinations. The assignments and the exams carried equal weightings. The final grades ranged from C+ to A. The results further showed that performance on the course was closely correlated with academic qualifications and years on the job. In summary, it can be said that this first set of participants to the regional course were extremely mature, dedicated and hard-working. They have set a very high standard for others to emulate.

f. The Administrative Arrangements

Although it was acknowledged that the CCC would require an assistant to undertake routine administrative matters, and a shortlist of candidates was selected, this position had not yet been filled. It was crucial therefore to co-opt some assistance for the administration of the course. The Stenographer at the Statistics sub-programme was eventually deployed to assist. The two participants from the CARICOM Secretariat who attended the course were also very helpful with several of the detailed administrative matters, including the travel arrangements for participants, the procurement of accommodation for both participants and for the

course secretariat, arrangements for computer laboratories, the procurement of books and materials etc.

g. Accreditation

It was agreed that in addition to developing practical capabilities in demographic analysis at the intermediate level, some level of accreditation should be pursued given the intensity of the course. Accreditation, *inter alia*, depends crucially on the breadth and depth of the curriculum, the calibre of lecturers as well as other logistical arrangements. Given the depth of the curriculum, the intensity and practicality of the course, and the professional calibre of the lecturers, accreditation should be easily attained.

IV CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In concluding, the following recommendations are suggested:

- (i) The First Regional Course on Demographic Analysis demonstrated the strong need and interest in training at this level in our Region. It is strongly recommended therefore that this course be repeated next year;
- (ii) Several changes to the plan of operations should be made as recommended:
 - (a) A number of administrative decisions must be made well in advance in order to avert negative circumstances;
 - (b) As early as February of next year, for example, the CCC or his representative should travel to UWI to formalise the venue and related logistics. This includes, *inter alia*, the procurement of comfortable accommodation as near to the lecture halls as possible, the identification of a suitable room, high-speed internet facilities and at least two desktop computers and reliable catering, etc.;

- (c) Efforts should be made to identify funding for the procurement of a laptop computer per country participating in the course. Funding agencies should be approached in this regard;
- (d) The calibre of lecturers and lecturing should be maintained and it is recommended that the same consultant is retained for the second regional course;
- (e) It may be necessary to consider extending the duration of the course by another week in order to move properly arrange for personal study time in between topics and assignments and to prepare for examinations. In particular, more time is needed for the module on Population Estimates and Projections;
- (f) Efforts will have to be made to ensure that the necessary books and materials are procured in a timely manner;
- (g) Adequate funds should be guaranteed well in advance of implementation of the activity.

ACTION REQUIRED

The **Meeting** is **invited** to:

- (i) **note** the successful conduct of the First Regional Demographic Analysis Course;
- (ii) **also note** the recommendations arising from the conduct of this Course in order to improve on subsequent courses in the Region.
