

**THIRTY- FIRST MEETING OF  
THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF  
CARIBBEAN STATISTICIANS**

**SCCS/2006/31/5**

**Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago**

**6-8 November 2006**

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**IMPROVING AND HARMONISING PRODUCTION OF STATISTICAL DATA AT  
NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS IN CARICOM**

**EXCERPT FROM THE CARIBBEAN INTEGRATION SUPPORT PROGRAMME  
JANUARY 2006**

**1. Introduction**

Statistical cooperation in CARICOM has mainly been through the Standing Committee of Statisticians (SCCS) established in 1974. Since then, a number of initiatives have taken place. Recently, advisory groups targeting key areas of statistical work have been created.

The implementation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), as well as compliance with other commitments at the bi-lateral, hemispheric and international levels demand the availability of quality information on the production and movement of goods and services, as well as on the stocks and flows of capital and labour within the Region and between the Region and the rest of the world. Statistics are therefore, a key instrument for the monitoring of the Regional Integration Process and the positioning of the Region in the world economy.

## **2. Current situation**

The quality of statistical systems in the Region (defined in terms of relevance, accuracy, timeliness, coherence, accessibility and interpretability) is in general deficient. Key economic data, necessary for the development of regional policies and the monitoring of regional integration, are in many cases not available or inadequate. As far as overall data is concerned in the Region, some countries have relatively well developed systems for collection and collation, while others have significant gaps in the data collecting agency and in the process of collation and communication. Systemic programming of statistical activities (medium/short term with clear customer focus) is either absent or needs substantial improvement. In the countries where institutions other than the Central Statistical Office or the Central Bank compile at least a part of the economic statistics (decentralized statistical systems), the coordination of the systems at the national level is in general badly organised. The first steps in the realisation of interregional harmonisation of statistical concepts and methodologies in line with internationally accepted norms and standards have already been taken, but have not led to wide-scale implementation partly owing to lack of funding. There is also an insufficient usage of available technologies in statistical processing in many countries, and the final products are not disseminated in a professional, modern and user friendly way. The sub-optimal reputation of the statistical organizations at the national level is in many cases caused by the way they are presented externally and the absence of professional image building. Lastly, national statistical systems in all countries are confronted with a shortage of resources in staffing (in the qualitative and quantitative sense), technical infrastructure, office environment, and finance.

Many countries are experiencing problems through the loss of recently recruited, young, educated staff. In many cases, this was due to the social status of work in statistical offices, the limited career possibilities and the lack of intellectual challenges offered. Attempts have been made over the years to facilitate a regional view on statistics. Despite a clear appreciation for the activities of the CARICOM Secretariat, and national priorities tend to prevail. This is also because of the lack of resources for a more

intensive participation in regional coordination and harmonisation.

Most of the efforts to enable a regional view have been through the annual meetings of the SCCS which is a forum for development, harmonisation and discussion of common issues/challenges as well as interaction among the Chief Statisticians/Directors of Statistics and counterparts or users of statistics from regional and international organisations. Various regional workshops convened by the CARICOM Secretariat with donor support and sometimes in collaboration with other organisations in National Accounts, Trade in Services, Social Statistics have sought to either produce Common Guidelines or a Common approach to develop these areas and of course the regional strategy to Census taking implemented in the 1990 and 2000 Rounds of Censuses.

By far the most significant attempts to facilitate a regional view of statistics have been in 2001 when the issue of Statistics was taken to the Eighth Meeting of the Resumed Session of the Community Council of Ministers in The Bahamas, and in January 2005 with the presentation to the Fifteenth Meeting of the Community Council of a resolution on regional statistical development that was prepared jointly by the Secretariat and the SCCS and a Regional Statistical Work Programme in support of the CSME. This Work Programme and resolution were approved and endorsed by the Community Council and mechanisms are being put in place for its implementation. Undoubtedly, this event has implications for the current Project relative to the themes and actions detailed in the Work Programme and the activity of statistical programming.

The CARICOM Secretariat has primary responsibility for the production, compilation, analysis and distribution of regional statistics. It is however, restricted in the conduct of its tasks and pursuit of its mandate by its limited institutional capacity. In order to ensure that the CARICOM Secretariat is able to effectively support the regional integration process, including the CSME, adequate institutional capacity in the Region and, in particular, on the part of the CARICOM Secretariat, is essential and these problems would have to be addressed.

### **3. Areas of Assistance**

The main activities under this component of the Caribbean Integration Support Programme (CISP) shall, therefore, include:

#### **3.1 Harmonising the Inter-Regional Statistical Infrastructure**

The objective of the CISP support in this area is to provide the means for improved regional policy and decision making. The anticipated results include harmonised statistics on the basis of which regional policies could be formulated and decisions made.

The activities envisaged include:

- (i) Improving technical coordination within the SCCS, in coordination with the work of the CARICOM Secretariat and the Dominican Republic by incorporating the work of existing SCCS Advisory Groups into CARIFORUM Economic Statistics Action Plans (CESAPs);
- (ii) Establishing, within the CARICOM Secretariat, a Statistics Help Desk focusing on the circulation of regional guidelines, transmission of technological changes and technical support and information on basic statistical methods and standard software;
- (iii) Improving the organisation and use of statistical databases by assisting the CARICOM Secretariat and Member States in defining and implementing a structured and regular system for the delivery of key economic data to feed into national and regional data banks;

- (iv) Setting up a web-based communication infrastructure and developing systems for uploading, storing, and accessing documentation, and dissemination of statistical indicators.

### **3.2 Assisting in Improving Statistical Programming, Production and Dissemination of Key Economic Statistics**

The quality of data produced and its appropriate dissemination is an integral determinant for efficient planning in the Region. The results anticipated include improved production and dissemination of important economic statistics.

The activities envisaged include:

- (i) Developing, pilot testing, implementing, evaluating and documenting standards; and processing guidelines and quality measures for selected areas through CESAPs;
- (ii) Strengthening the statistical programming process within the CARICOM Secretariat via a specific CESAP 'Statistical Dissemination' which will support the formulation of Medium Term Regional and National Statistical Plans;
- (iii) Improving the dissemination of national and regional economic statistics via a specific CESAP 'Statistical Dissemination' which will establish quality control and consistency checks;

### **3.3 Training Staff and Using Economic Statistics for Monitoring of the Regional Integration Process**

The objective of CISP support in this area is to develop human capacity and monitor the regional integration process. The result anticipated include enhanced regional and national capacities in economic statistics and increased use of economic statistics in measuring progress in the regional integration process.

The activities envisaged include:

- (i) Organisation of courses in areas not covered by CESAPs;
- (ii) Facilitating study and field tours abroad;
- (iii) Facilitating participation in workshops and seminars;
- (iv) Organising management seminars;
- (v) Facilitating participation in common and joint regional capacity building activities.

#### **ACTION REQUIRED**

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

- **consider** the approach to capacity building as set out in the CISP.

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## LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX OF CISP

|  | INTERVENTION LOGIC  | INDICATORS  | SOURCES OF VERIFICATION | ASSUMPTIONS |
|--|---|---|-------------------------|-------------|
|  | <u>Result 3 – Improved and harmonised production of statistical data at national and regional levels in CARICOM</u> |   |                         |             |
|  | 3.1 Harmonise interregional statistical infrastructure.   | <p>3.1.1 Improve technical coordination within standing Committee of Caribbean Community Statisticians (SCCS) in coordination with the work of the CARICOM Secretariat and the DR.</p> <p>3.1.2 Establish a statistics help-desk in the CARICOM Secretariat.</p> <p>3.1.3 Improve the organisation and use of statistical databases.</p> <p>3.1.4 Set up web-based communication infrastructure for upload, storage, access to documentation and dissemination of statistical indicators.</p> |                         |             |
|  | 3.2 Assist in improving statistical programming, production and dissemination of key economic statistics.           | 3.2.1 Develop, pilot test, implement, evaluate and document methodologies, standards, processing guidelines and quality measures for selected areas through CARIFORUM Economic Statistics Action Plans (CESAPs).  |                         |             |

|  | <b>INTERVENTION LOGIC</b>   | <b>INDICATORS</b>   | <b>SOURCES OF VERIFICATION</b> | <b>ASSUMPTIONS</b> |
|--|---|---|--------------------------------|--------------------|
|  |   | <p>3.2.2 Strengthen the statistical programming process within CARICOM Secretariat via a specific CESAP ‘Statistical Programme’.</p> <p>3.2.3 Improve the dissemination of national and regional economic statistics via a specific CESAP ‘Statistical Dissemination’.</p>  |                                |                    |
|  | 3.3 Train staff and use economic statistics for monitoring of the regional integration process. | <p>3.3.1 Organise courses in selected areas not covered by CESAPs.</p> <p>3.3.2 Facilitate overseas study and field study tours.</p> <p>3.3.3 Facilitate participation in workshops and seminars.</p> <p>3.3.4 Organise management seminars.</p> <p>3.3.5 Facilitate participation in common regional capacity building activities.</p> |                                |                    |