

ECLAC/CDCC Training Workshop in
Evidence-based Social Policy Formulation
for the Caribbean
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**REPORT OF THE ECLAC/CDCC TRAINING WORKSHOP IN
EVIDENCE-BASED SOCIAL POLICY FORMULATION
FOR THE CARIBBEAN**

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REPORT ON FIRST ECLAC/CDCC TRAINING WORKSHOP IN EVIDENCE-BASED SOCIAL POLICY FORMULATION FOR CARIBBEAN

Introduction

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean/Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (ECLAC/CDCC) secretariat recently convened the first in a series of training workshops in evidence-based social policy formulation for Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The workshop was formally opened on the evening of Monday 28 October 2002 at the Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre, and the actual training was held from Tuesday 29 October to Thursday 31 October 2002 at the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean in Port of Spain.

The objective of the training workshop was twofold, the first being to enhance the skills of senior technocrats in evidence-based social policy formulation, using Caribbean social statistics in a technology-based environment and with a hands-on approach. The other objective was to familiarise participants with the workings of the Caribbean Social Statistical Databases project.

Attending the meeting were 28 senior technocrats who work in the field of social development, drawn from among social planners and senior statisticians, from 13 Caribbean countries. In addition, staff members of, and Consultants to, the Social Development Unit of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat, acted as facilitators. The list of participants is annexed to this report.

The keynote speakers at the opening ceremony of the training workshop were Ms. Len Ishmael, Director, ECLAC/CDCC secretariat; Dr. Juliet Melville of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB); and Ms. Jacquelyn Joseph of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat.

Ms. Ishmael informed the invitees that through the Social Databases Project, the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat had sought to meet the demand of member States for social statistical data that were reliable, accessible, and comparable, and which supported social analysis. She explained that when the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat began formulating this project in early 1998, and undertook it in 2001, many experts, although endorsing the idea of the project, felt it was impossible to achieve. They noted the differing legislative framework, cultural attitudes to information management and constraints to producing quality social statistics at the national level. They saw these as insurmountable barriers to the development of Caribbean social statistical databases that would be comparable and fully searchable. In this context, she

announced that through the project ECLAC/CDCC was now able to make three databases available to governments. These databases housed the Survey of Living Conditions of some nine countries; the Labour Force Survey from two countries; and the 1990/91 Population Census from 14 countries. She assured all present that the project intended to continue the data collection processes and that in the long term, the databases sought to increase the capacity of policy makers to formulate, implement and evaluate social policies.

In her presentation, Dr. Juliet Melville congratulated the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat for leading this initiative, and for its efforts in establishing the social statistical databases. She informed guests that in September 2000 at the United Nations Millennium Summit, world leaders agreed to a set of time-bound and measurable goals, targets and indicators for the development agenda to 2015, now referred to as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). She explained that a framework of eight goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators to measure progress towards the MDGs was adopted by a consensus of experts from the United Nations Secretariat in consultation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank, and other specialized agencies of the United Nations System. She identified one of the major challenges for the subregion, as the systematic collection of data pertaining to social/human development as set out in the Millennium Declaration.

Dr. Melville also expressed her wish for better coordination among donor agencies in order to prevent duplication of efforts and to maximize the benefit to the subregion.

Ms. Jacquelyn Joseph also congratulated the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat on this initiative and expressed CARICOM's pleasure at having been invited to be a joint partner of the project from its inception. Ms. Joseph underscored the need for reliable information to ensure the efficient and effective use of limited resources in the Caribbean Community. She stated that the training was timely since governments were currently embarking on measures to meet the challenges of social development as they strove to achieve competitiveness within the constantly changing global environment.

Agenda item 1:
Social policy in the Caribbean, its history and development

As the workshop participants embarked on the examination of the first thematic area, they were welcomed by Ms. Asha Kambon of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat who sought to clarify the aims, objectives and expected outcomes of the workshop. The programme of work was then outlined and agreed upon.

Dr. Dennis Brown, Lecturer, University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine, was introduced to provide a historical context for social policy in the Caribbean and the important factors that went into the shaping of the modern Caribbean social policy framework. In his presentation, Dr. Brown also identified the key social issues in the subregion and critiqued the policy responses, especially what he described as an excessive degree of bureaucratic paternalism, while outlining what he thought were more positive alternative responses.

Participants were asked to focus, in the coming days, on how social planners helped to perpetuate the aforementioned bureaucratic paternalism, and to also think of ways in which they could help to foster different policy responses.

The discussion that followed focused on issues in social policy formulation, including the use of data and the limitations of the data-gathering process for this purpose. One of the concerns raised by participants in this regard, was the effect of migration on attempts to conduct household surveys that compared the situation of selected households from one survey year to another. Participants also raised issues concerning the importance of gathering more qualitative data in an effort to understand the survival strategies of people and the need to increase public awareness about the importance of surveys in order to elicit cooperation.

Following the discussion of the evolution and history of social policy in the Caribbean, country delegations were invited to make their presentations.

As part of the preparation for the workshop each country delegation had been asked to prepare a case study that would describe social policy in their country, with reference to a specific issue. The delegation was required to examine policy development and implementation; highlight best practices; address lessons that could be learned from the situations described; and discuss difficulties with or constraints on the process.

Country presentations were wide and varied. Presentation documents are annexed to this report for easy reference. Table I provides a schematic overview of the information presented in the workshop.

Table 1: Social policy issues as presented by participating countries

PRESENTATION	COUNTRY
Domestic violence	Antigua and Barbuda
The formulation of comprehensive social policy	Aruba
The development of a National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan	Belize
Poverty alleviation strategies	Grenada
Social policy formation in light of the volcanic eruptions that continue to take place in the island	Montserrat
The situation of teenage pregnancy	St. Kitts/Nevis
The provision of housing for low-income families	Saint Lucia
The education policy	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
The formulation of comprehensive social policy	Trinidad & Tobago
Poverty alleviation through education among indigenous Caribs	Dominica
Social Prevention of Crime	Netherlands Antilles
Project monitoring system for children in need of special protection measures	Suriname

Agenda item 2:

Social data in the Caribbean: what exists, what are the priorities?

A panel was convened to explore/discuss issues related to data on crime, gender-based violence and labour. The first presenter, Mr. Robert Nuttal, consultant to the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), spoke about his project on the collection of crime data in the Caribbean. The objective of his research, which was conducted in five Caribbean countries, was to compare the perception of crime to the actual incidence of crime in the subregion. His research methodology was based on a questionnaire that was designed to elicit data comparable to that which was being collected worldwide. He also demonstrated the subjectivity of perceptions concerning the incidence and prevalence of crime, noting that countries in which crime was fairly well-controlled could in fact have perceptions of a high incidence of crime in the society and vice versa. This was because each country's level of tolerance for criminal activity might be at different levels, due to their constant exposure or lack of exposure to these activities. Mr. Nuttal used the results of his research in Barbados to illustrate the issues related to data collection on crime in the Caribbean, such as gaps and overlaps in data sources.

His remarks were followed by presentations from Ms. Roberta Clarke of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat and Mr. Reynold Simons of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Caribbean Office on the state of data in the areas of domestic violence and the labour market, respectively.

Ms. Clarke informed participants that a domestic violence protocol had been developed by the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean. In outlining a number of the reasons behind the development of this protocol, Ms.

Clarke explained that society was largely unaware of what caused domestic violence, and if social services were in fact reaching the intended victims. There remained a need to know who the victims were, how many were abused, why such abuse took place, and to maintain a profile of the perpetrators.

She also explained that although most Caribbean countries had various types of data on domestic violence, it was difficult to glean from such data whether the incidence and prevalence of domestic violence had changed over time. This was because information about certain types of incidents had only recently begun to be collected and classified as domestic violence. Ms. Clarke suggested that the process of collecting data on domestic violence was also hindered by the following:

- (a) Underreporting of the instances of abuse;
- (b) Inadequate documentation; and
- (c) Fragmentation in the reporting of the crime.

In devising a Caribbean database for domestic violence, Ms. Clarke pointed to the various issues that needed to be resolved. These included the need to clarify definitions of what was meant by the terms 'domestic' and 'violence'. Furthermore, data must be sufficient for meaningful comparisons to be made, confidentiality must be assured, the incidence and prevalence domestic violence must be detected and policies must be designed and implemented. It was also suggested that harmonisation of the way in which data of domestic violence was collected, across the Caribbean, would best permit comparison and analysis. The commitment to the creation of a database did not however, invalidate the need for prevalence studies or the accumulation of qualitative data.

In his presentation, Mr Simons identified several challenges facing the Caribbean's economic environment. These included:

- (a) The new global financial order;
- (b) The more open international trade regimes under World Trade Organization (WTO) rules, which would have severe implications for products from the Caribbean that might previously have had guaranteed markets;
- (c) The CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME);
- (d) The free trade act agreement which would subsume the Caribbean under the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA); and

(e) The various multilateral policies present in the subregion that might need to be rationalised.

He explained that in addition to the aforementioned challenges, there was the need to ensure sustainable social development, which meant, inter alia, adapting the education systems in order to create a more meaningful and relevant workforce; encouraging the cultural development of various States; adjusting the social protection systems to the new environment; and making the distribution of resources more equitable within the various societies.

Mr. Simons called for an integrated approach to the social and economic challenges facing our societies. This must be done, he said, with the understanding that the policies being applied to each sector must be mutually reinforcing. In this context, the formation of sound policies necessitates accurate information and therefore, as a matter of priority, the integrity of the information base needs to be examined.

Mr Simons then briefly outlined some characteristics of data and information present in the Caribbean. He defined data as that proceeding from an elementary source, in the form of electronic files or statistics, and which targeted specialized users, while information targeted the general user and did not have a specific structure. Mr. Simons pointed out that meaningful analysis of data and information could result in reliable and useful policy formulation. He explained that the ILO policies focused mainly on four areas:

- (a) Basic rights at the work place;
- (b) Employment, social protection and social dialogue;
- (c) Understanding the labour market and poverty; and
- (d) The bringing together of labour market actors and civil society.

Most of the labour market sources of data came from censuses, household surveys, administrative sources and qualitative sources. Each type of source could assist in one or more areas of the primary policy areas of the ILO. Mr Simons identified some of the areas weakly covered in current sources, namely wages, the informal sector, social protection and social dialogue. In analysing the available data, he also identified other weaknesses deriving from data inadequacy in the areas that related to underemployment, the working poor, trade liberalization and employment, productivity, education and training, the labour market, social equity and integration. In moving forward towards producing more accurate and useful data there was a need to harmonize concepts and definitions across the subregion at all levels. There was also a need to coordinate data from various sources, whether national, regional or international.

Mr. Simons made recommendations for improvements in the areas that needed strengthening. These included the establishment of an institutional structure or network, incorporating a lead agency; the involvement of relevant stakeholders; and a sense of ownership of the structure by contributing partners, which would impose responsibilities and deliver privileges and constant promotion and training.

A brief period of discussion followed. Among the issues raised was the wide variation in unemployment rates found between the Labour Force Surveys and the Population Censuses. This issue was of concern to participants because in most countries the Population Census usually took the place of the Labour Force Survey in the year that the National Census was conducted. Mr. Simons confirmed the existence of this practice and acknowledged that the wide variation in results was indeed cause for concern. He explained that the difference was most likely due to the fact that the census was larger and more general, with fewer questions that were geared specifically towards the question of unemployment. Also, labour force interviewers received more training in the area of labour market issues and labour force surveys were more rigorously rechecked.

Agenda item 3:

Using social statistics for evidence-based social policy formulation

The Chairperson of the session's proceedings began the day's activities by inviting comments on the previous day's presentations. Peer critique of country presentations was encouraged and participants were commended for their country reports, which were generally informative and well prepared. Comments touched on issues of funding for research activities and the need to persuade sponsors and stakeholders about the viability of the proposed project. Participants noted the need to involve stakeholders in the design of the project and also spoke of the need for institutional support for the data collection process. All participants agreed that there was a need for a high level of sensitization of their societies to the importance and necessity of data collection and the creation of databases.

It was noted that many of the research initiatives were project-based with consultants hired for a contracted period. It was agreed that it was necessary to find a way of facilitating a more sustained environment and continuity in the projects undertaken. It was also agreed that no research project should be isolated but should instead be integrated into overall development plans, as articulated by ECLAC's paradigm shift in their technical assistance efforts to governments.

Dr. Godfrey St. Bernard of the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies made a presentation on the use of social statistics for

evidence-based social policy formulation and analysis. He defined social policy as a set of programmes and activities designed to enhance the social well-being of the population. He stated however, that this definition did not provide insight into the activities involved in deriving a social policy, which included the development of social indicators.

He explained the importance of developing social indicators and emphasised that this process was dependent on evidence arising out of specific research and was usually the basis for formulating social programmes. Dr St Bernard emphasised that, in the development of programmes, it was important to collect only data that were relevant to the issues at hand; that evaluation and monitoring at specific intervals were necessary to keep track of the outcomes and to determine if targets were being met; and that data was also necessary to evaluate impact. Dr. St. Bernard also spoke of the importance of access to the required data as well as the importance of noting the source of the data. He also dealt with issues related to the actual data collection exercise and noted that it was very important to consider feasibility issues before implementing research projects.

In the ensuing discussion it was noted that it was the primary responsibility of policy planners to set the targets or goals that would allow for the development of indicators. It was also noted that the sources for data could come from areas that were not always obvious. The importance of data dissemination was also discussed, with participants pointing to the importance of determining how much of the data was shared with the wider society, when this was done and at what levels, since some information could be seen as very sensitive.

This discussion was followed by an introduction to the ECLAC/CDCC social statistical databases.

Ms. Asha Kambon shared with the participants, background information on the project, as well as its objectives and justification. She acknowledged the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for their generous sponsorship of the project.

In addition to the background of the project, participants were exposed to some of the technical aspects of the creation of the databases by the Information Technology (IT) Consultant, Mr. Kerwyn Roach. In his presentation, he pointed to some of the issues related to the cleaning and processing of datasets that posed some difficulties in the construction of the databases. This was followed by a presentation by Ms. Lynette Joseph-Brown of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat on some of the issues of data analysis arising out of the problems identified in the datasets. The full ECLAC presentation is annexed to this report.

These presentations generated discussion, with participants calling for more feedback when data was used for analysis in order to facilitate improvement in the availability and quality of the required data. In this regard, it was noted that this required greater sharing of data sets with researchers in the region.

This observation was endorsed by participants, with the additional observation that the reality of globalisation and the CSME and subsequently the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) demanded greater transparency and sharing of data, as well as greater harmonization in the presentation of data from the subregion. It was noted that this was, by and large, already the case for economic data.

Concern for the incidence of non-sampling errors during the data collection exercise led to queries about the use of such modern technological devices as handheld computers to mitigate these errors. Responses from some participants suggested, however, that the cost of the technology was considered prohibitive. In addition to cost, it was felt that there were risks associated with the use of such devices, including misuse, loss, theft and the need for very effective and costly communication systems and other technology to support the use of handheld computers and laptops in field research.

With regard to accurate data collection and entry, there was a consensus that a well-designed questionnaire and well-trained interviewers, accompanied by strict monitoring and supervision, would adequately reduce the risk of inaccurate data.

The discussion on the databases was brought to a close, but participants were reminded that they would have ample opportunity to experience hands-on interface with the databases in the completion of their assignment.

The group assignment was presented by the facilitator and the participants were formed into multidisciplinary and cross cultural groups.

Participants worked in their respective groups to define a social policy problem and put into practice what they had learnt about the use of data for evidence-based social policy formulation. They were required to develop policy recommendations arising out of their findings. Each group made a presentation on their findings and recommendations.

During the final session participants were asked to evaluate their experiences at the workshop. A full evaluation is annexed to this report. The evaluation indicates that participants felt that the training experience would be useful not only to their present but future work and that there was need for training in a number of related areas, including computer skills for statisticians.

Each participant was presented with a certificate of participation. Participants were also thanked for their thorough preparation as evidenced in their various presentations, as well as for their very lively and enthusiastic participation in the workshop. The meeting closed with the usual exchange of courtesies.

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Annex II

COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS

Annex III

ECLAC/CDCC PRESENTATIONS

Annex IV

EVALUATION REPORT

**EVALUATION OF ECLAC/CDCC TRAINING WORKSHOP IN
EVIDENCE-BASED SOCIAL POLICY FORMULATION FOR
CARIBBEAN SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS)**

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean/Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (ECLAC/CDCC) secretariat convened the first in a series of training workshops in evidence-based social policy formulation for Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The workshop was formally opened on the evening of Monday 28 October 2002 at the Trinidad Hilton and Conference Centre, and ended on Thursday 31 October 2002. Training sessions were held at the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean in Port of Spain.

Participants for the training workshop were senior technocrats who work in the field of social development, drawn from among social planners and senior statisticians, from 13 member countries of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat. At the end of the workshop, participants were given questionnaires and asked to evaluate their experiences.

What were your expectations of the workshop?

Training in the identification of indicators, as well as training in data analysis for social policy formulation were the responses that were most often given when participants were asked what were their expectations of the workshop. This was closely followed by the expectation that participants would be given additional insight into what evidence-based social policy formulation was all about. Some of the participants also expected to learn more about the Caribbean Social Statistical Databases.

Table 1: Expectations of the workshop

Expectations	Number of responses	Percentage of responses	Percentage of cases
Receive and exchange knowledge, including obtaining information on best practices and lessons learnt	5	14.7	20.0
Training in the identification of indicators and data analysis for social policy formulation	11	32.4	44.0
To learn more about the social statistical databases	4	11.8	16.0
Training in SPSS	1	2.9	4.0
More insight into evidence-based social policy formulation	9	26.5	36.0
Other/Not stated	4	11.7	16.0
Total	34	100.0	

8 missing cases; 18 valid cases

Did the workshop meet your expectations?

The workshop met the expectations of the majority of the participants (61%). Twenty seven per cent of the participants reported that the workshop exceeded their expectations, while 12% said that the workshop partially met their expectations. According to one participant, “I had expected a basic workshop where introduction was given on the database. I’m glad it turned out to be an intense experience whereby I got a dynamic experience in social policy and statistical analysis.”

Table 2: Did the workshop meet your expectations?

Degree to which expectations were met	Frequency	Percentage
Exceeded expectations	7	26.9
Met expectations	16	61.5
Met expectations partially	3	11.5
Total	26	100

Table 3: Are there any expectations that were not met?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
No	21	80.8
Yes	4	15.4
Not Stated	1	3.8
Total	26	100

Fifteen per cent of the participants said that some of their expectations were not met. Explanations of those expectations included the fact that: (a) participants did not get the opportunity to download data; (b) some would have liked some time to see a bit of Trinidad; (c) one participant wanted to understand how economic planning differed from social policy planning since economists are often accused of ignoring the social factors; (d) more time was needed for a better presentation of the assignment; and (e) one participant expected to be introduced to the Vulnerability Index

To what extent was the material presented at the workshop useful to your current and future work?

Most of the participants felt that the material presented was useful to both their current and future work, with responses ranging from very useful to

useful. None of the participants felt that the material presented was not useful to their present or future work.

Table 4: To what extent was the material useful to your current work?

Usefulness	Frequency	Percentage
Very useful	18	69.2
Useful	8	30.8
Total	26	100

Table 5: To what extent was the material useful to your future work?

Usefulness	Frequency	Percentage
Very useful	22	84.6
Useful	4	15.4
Total	26	100

How adequate was the material presented?

Participants had a lot to say about the adequacy of the material that was presented. In addition to the comments presented in Box 1, almost one quarter of the respondents felt that the material presented was too much, while 8% felt that it was not enough. However, 68% of the participants felt that the materials presented was just enough information for the workshop in which they were participating.

Table 6: To what extent was the material presented adequate

Adequacy of material	Frequency	Percentage
Too much	6	24.0
Just enough	17	68.0
Not enough	2	8.0
Total	25	100

Box 1: Comments on adequacy of material presented

1. There was not enough time and enough data (additional datafiles) to prepare adequately for presentation
2. Did not have enough time to read all of the material
3. There was a lot of reference material that was not adequately addressed in the workshop
4. Some of the documents should have been placed on diskettes since paper handouts were bulky
5. Although there was a great deal of material presented, it was manageable
6. Not enough time to read all the material but hopefully will be of great use. If material proves to be inadequate we might request some from your office at a later date.

Are there any areas covered in the workshop for which you wish to have further training?

Training in SPSS was the overwhelmingly popular response of participants when asked to identify areas in which they would like to have further training. This response represented 35.3% of all the responses and was identified by approximately 67% of participants. Many participants also expressed interest in training in data collection methods, survey design and data processing, as well as further statistical training and computer literacy for social planners.

Table 7: Any other areas for further training

Expectations	Number of responses	Percentage of responses	Percentage of cases
Further statistical training	6	17.6	33.3
Data collection methods	8	20.6	44.5
Training in SPSS	12	35.3	66.7
Computer literacy for statisticians	2	5.9	11.1
Computer literacy for social planners	6	17.6	33.3
Total	34	100.0	188.9

8 missing cases; 18 valid cases

How did the logistics affect the training workshop?

Sixty one per cent of the participants felt that the administrative and other logistical support systems that accompanied the training workshop adequately supported the training process. Thirty nine per cent felt that these support systems actually enriched the training experience. One comment by a

participant pointed to the necessity of installing other computer software in addition to the specific software being used for training. The participant said that the training workshop, “would have been even richer if some of the more common computer programmes were installed on the computers in front of participants”.

Table 8: How would you assess the logistics of the workshop?

Adequacy of material	Frequency	Percentage
Enriched the training	10	38.5
Adequately supported the process	16	61.5
Total	26	100

General Comments

Participants were given an opportunity in the evaluation of the training workshop to make general comments. The comments were well balanced between constructive criticism and positive assessments of various aspects of the workshop. Apart from acknowledging the relevance of the workshop and expressing appreciation for the opportunity to use and be exposed to different computer software, participants also expressed a desire for follow-up sessions to reinforce the ideas to which they had been exposed in this current workshop. See Box 2 for further comments.

Box 2: General comments from participants concerning workshop

1. A welcome workshop – very relevant. Provided an opportunity for planners and statisticians to develop greater appreciation of each other’s work.
2. Minor problems with time management. Good opportunity for exposure to research on computer
3. The time for doing assignments was short and the computers in front of participants did not have the usual useful Microsoft programmes
4. Workshop was well administered and executed. However a follow-up to this workshop has not yet been stated. This may cause a problem since it could be seen as “just another workshop”.
5. Good to look beforehand that in each group somebody is proficient with SPSS. May be a good idea to split up members from one country. Gives more diversity in opinions and experience. Generally very good training, well-prepared and very good presentations.
6. Very well organised workshop. Facilitators were very helpful and this made learning enjoyable. I would like more exposure to statistical analysis.
7. I will suggest further workshops. More time should be given for working group sessions. Working group sessions gives participants more opportunity to enhance their knowledge etc. than long lectures.
8. Practical approach was most useful.
9. Extremely informative. The need for co-ordinating the region's statistical information system has been clearly emphasised.
10. The workshop was well articulated and delivered. The only critique is that the time to do this was too tight.
11. It was an exceptional experience
12. The training workshop was very interesting. I think insisting on the use of PowerPoint is a very good idea.