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Training Course on Measuring ICT access and use in households and businesses

(Organized jointly by ECLAC, ITU, UNCTAD and the Ministry of Public Administration, Government of Trinidad and Tobago)

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Introduction

The Training Course on Measuring Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Access and Use in Households and Businesses was organized by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), as part of the activities of its project Observatory for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (OSILAC), under the framework of the Statistical Conference of the Americas and the Partnership on Measuring ICT for development. The workshop was convened on 26-30 January 2009 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, with the support of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the Ministry of Public Administration, Government of Trinidad and Tobago, which co-hosted this important training workshop.

The training course aimed at improving the capacity of official data producers in Caribbean countries to produce internationally comparable statistics on ICT access and use in households and by individuals, ICT use by businesses, the ICT sector, and international trade in ICT goods.

The workshop offered Caribbean countries an opportunity to identify and understand ICT statistics and the importance of measuring ICT in a harmonized way for better policy-making and addressing the digital divide. At the same time, the importance of quality and reliability when carrying out surveys and producing statistics was addressed.

The training workshop combined two training courses developed by ITU and UNCTAD on the production of harmonized ICT statistics. These were the ITU Training Course on Measuring Access to and Use of ICT by Households and Individuals, and the UNCTAD Training Course on the Production of Statistics on the Information Economy. These training courses, also accompanied by methodological manuals, were developed to accomplish the objectives of these institutions in pursuing a better production of ICT statistics from the demand side, as well as to strengthen the technical assistance activities that these institutions carry out as members of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for development, specifically of the Task Group on Capacity-building.

The shortening of both courses, from one week for each course to one week for both, was due to the need to address both issues for Caribbean countries. National Statistics Offices (NSOs) in Caribbean countries are usually small and have human resources restrictions. In some cases one person or a small team is in charge of both topics. Furthermore, the available budget could cover only a one-week course. Taking these issues into account, the three organizing institutions put together a shortened version of the two courses while covering the core issues.

Participation

The training course was designed for the staff of NSOs and other national institutions in charge of the production of official statistics on the information society. However, the course also accepted participants from the ICT ministries of governments which expressed great interest in participating. This gave an opportunity for the trainer to emphasize the importance of collaboration among policy makers and statisticians, and those aspects that both needed to take into account when developing harmonized ICT statistics and ICT policy.

Thirteen countries of the region were represented at the course. It was attended by 24 participants and two observers, with a very equitable gender distribution. The households ICT statistics sessions were attended by 26 participants and four observers, while 25 participants and three observers attended the sessions on businesses ICT statistics.

Table 1. Distribution of participants

Sector	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Statistics	8	7	15
ICT policy	3	5	8
ICT regulation		1	1
Observer	1	1	2
Grand Total	13	13	26

Ten countries sent one participant each, all from the statistical offices. Jamaica and Barbados sent more than one (five and two, respectively). Trinidad and Tobago sent participants from the Central Statistical Office (two attended the complete course, three attended the business sessions, while four attended the household sessions), from the Ministry of Public Administration (four) and from the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT) (one). Annex II presents the complete list of participants.

Overview of the training course outcome

In general, the training course was very well received by participants. The evaluation rating given to the course and the material provided was "very good". Most participants were pleased that both statisticians and data users from ministries were involved. In particular, some statisticians expressed their interest in interacting with more ICT users during this type of training.

Although the course was designed for statisticians, it was useful for countries that statisticians interacted with ICT policy makers and ICT data users in charge of policy implementation. Given that there have been few opportunities for bringing together countries of the Caribbean and international organizations on the issue of measuring ICT statistics, the training was a good opportunity to promote this interaction, which helped to encourage NSOs to assume responsibility for measurement of ICT progress.

However, this mix of participants generated at the same time some contradiction in the final outcome and evaluation. On the one hand, ICT data users (policy makers) considered the training very technical while, on the other hand, statisticians would have liked more time on the technical aspects as well as practical exercises, especially on sampling methodology, and some aspects of data processing and data quality and evaluation. The important challenge in this respect stemmed from the need to balance the interests of two disparate groups in a workshop of a relatively short duration.

In general, other opportunities should be created to bring together both users and producers of ICT statistics, as the purpose of these training courses is rather technical and focused on ICT statistics producers.

In the Caribbean, the level of statistical development varies from country to country. This makes their participation in such events very heterogeneous, as some countries have much experience to share, while others have very little. In some cases the smaller countries engage consultancy firms to carry out surveys and provide results. Those NSOs that lack experience in collecting ICT data showed high interest in general topics, such as survey implementation in both business and household sectors, as well as on survey design and data sources, which deal more with general statistics than with ICT statistics.

At the same time, this course presented a unique opportunity to bring together a number of countries from the English-speaking Caribbean, most of which do not produce ICT statistics and do not yet have a structured ICT policy. This training course therefore contributed to fostering the production of ICT statistics in several countries of the subregion. Further work needs to be done to follow up on their activities to create evidence-based policies in the area of ICT for development.

As a final remark, the course content on the introduction of the relevance of the Information Society and the information economy for development could be expanded, providing examples on how ICT statistics could be used to inform policy.

Evaluation of the Training Course

Various evaluations were carried out during the course, including a specific evaluation for each segment of the course (households and businesses). An overview of the final evaluation, including the methodology of the course, the number of participants and the organization, as well as general suggestions follows:

Most of the participants rated the methodology as very good (48%) and good (30%), with 17% evaluating it as excellent. Participants expressed an interest in having more opportunity for open discussions and practical exercises.

Taking into account the topic of the course, 70% of the participants considered that the number of participants was adequate, 26% considered it too low, and only one participant considered it too high. Some participants commented that the varying experiences among participants were good, and that it would have been useful to obtain the experiences of local data users in terms of type of data required and the challenges in accessing quality data.

The organization of the course was well perceived in general: 39% qualified it as excellent, 35% very good and 22% good. One recommendation was that evaluations for the course should be done electronically.

Annex I

PROGRAMME

Monday 26 January 2008				
8:30 - 9:00	Registration of participants			
9:00 - 10:00	Opening session			
10:00 - 11:00	Introduction to the course: Contents, objectives and methodology Presentation of participants			
11:00 - 11:15	Break			
PART A: ICT statistics on Businesses and on the ICT sector				
11:15 - 12:30	Module B-1: Understanding concepts and definitions of indicators on the use of ICT by businesses and the ICT sector			
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch			
13:30 - 15:15	Module B-1: Understanding concepts and definitions of indicators on the use of ICT by businesses and the ICT sector (cont.)			
15:15 - 15:30	Break			
15:30 - 17:00	Module B-1: Understanding concepts and definitions of indicators on the use of ICT by businesses and the ICT sector (cont.)			
17:00 - 17:15	Test of Module B-1			
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	Tuesday 27 January 2008			
8:30 - 10:15	Module B-2: Developing an ICT data collection strategy in the business sector			
10:15 - 10:30	Break			
10:30 - 12:30	Module B-2: Developing an ICT data collection strategy in the business sector (cont.)			
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch			
13:30 - 15:15	Module B-3: Designing an ICT in business survey			
15:15 - 15:30	Break			
15:30 - 17:00	Module B-3: Designing an ICT in business survey (cont.)			
17:00 - 17:15	Test of Modules B-2 and B-3			
Wednesday 28 January 2008				
8:30 - 10:15	Module B-4: Processing ICT survey data from businesses			
10:15 - 10:30	Break			
10:30 - 12:00	Module B-5: Disseminating data on the use of ICT by businesses and the ICT sector			

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12:00 - 12:30	Test of Modules B-4 and B-5			
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch			
PART B: ICT Statistics on Households and Individuals				
13:30 - 15:15	Module H-1: Introduction to household ICT statistics. Survey planning and preparatory work			
15:15 - 15:30	Break			
15:30 - 17:00	Module H-1: Introduction to household ICT statistics. Survey planning and preparatory work (cont.)			
17:00 - 17:30	Test and evaluation			
	Thursday 29 January 2008			
8:30 - 10:15	Module H-2: Statistical standards and topics. Data sources and collection techniques			
10:15 - 10:30	Break			
10:30 - 12:00	Module H-2: Statistical standards and topics. Data sources and collection techniques (cont.)			
12:00 - 12:30	Test and evaluation			
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch			
13:30 - 15:15	Module H-3: Questionnaire design. Survey design			
15:15 - 15:30	Break			
15:30 - 17:00	Module H-3: Questionnaire design. Survey design (cont.)			
17:00 - 17:30	Test and evaluation			
	Friday 30 January 2008			

Friday 30 January 2008

8:30 - 9:30	Module H-4: Data processing. Data quality and evaluation
9:30 - 10:00	Module H-5: Dissemination
10:00 – 10:30 <i>10:30 - 10:45</i>	Test and evaluation of Modules H-4 and H-5 Break
10:45 - 11:45	Institutional issues related to ICT indicators
11:45 – 13:00	Final course evaluation and discussion Closing ceremony (distribution of certificates)
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch

Annex II

List of Participants

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