

Expert Group Meeting on Data Sharing,
Data Ownership and Harmonization of Survey Datasets
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**REPORT OF THE ECLAC EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON DATA SHARING,
DATA OWNERSHIP AND HARMONIZATION OF SURVEY DATASETS**

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REPORT OF THE ECLAC EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON DATA SHARING, DATA OWNERSHIP AND HARMONIZATION OF SURVEY DATASETS

Background

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean convened a two-day Expert Group Meeting on Data Sharing and Data Ownership and the Harmonization of Survey Datasets, on 25-26 June 2007 in Port of Spain, Trinidad.

This meeting was the first milestone of the project on *“Improving Household Surveys in the Caribbean”* which seeks to improve the comparability of social statistics produced in the Caribbean through household surveys and to ensure international standards of comparability. The objectives of the meeting were two-fold and sought to:

- (a) Encourage the sharing of survey databases;
- (b) Discuss and forge a consensus on the harmonization/systemization of household data sets which will allow for comparability for data sets of other Caribbean countries

Present at the meeting was a cadre of senior statisticians and experts from National Statistical Offices (NSOs) of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) member countries and regional organizations/agencies. A full listing of the participants is annexed.

The meeting followed the agenda as detailed below:

1. Welcome and opening remarks
2. Adoption of agenda and overview of the meeting
3. Key note presentation on data ownership and data sharing in the Caribbean region
4. Issues in data sharing and ownership - Discussion
5. Presentation on collection, management and sharing of migration-related data in the Caribbean
6. Overview of household survey project and presentation on harmonization of survey data and methodologies
7. Country presentations on household survey experiences
8. Introduction to BADEHOG and BADEINSO
9. Achieving consensus on data sharing and harmonization
10. Remarks on “Knowledge Sharing: the experience of Caribbean Knowledge Management Centre”
11. Closure.

**Agenda item 1:
Welcome and opening**

Mr. Neil Pierre, Director of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, extended a warm welcome to all participants. He outlined the main objectives of the project, such as, the need to harmonize household survey methodologies, in addition to other related meta data in an attempt to facilitate more meaningful comparative results throughout the Caribbean. He noted that there were several concerns expressed in the subregion about the lack of Caribbean data available in comparison to those of the wider Latin American, for inclusion in regional publications. He stated that it was particularly important that Caribbean data be made more visible, therefore increasing its long-term usefulness. He thanked the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and all the present experts and organizations for their participation and welcomed the contributions that they would make over the two-day period.

He highlighted the importance of statistical information and analyses to sound policy and decision-making. He lamented the fact that countries in the region displayed tendencies of shying away from evidence-based policy planning, and that the situation across the Caribbean with respect to data availability and reliability was also very uneven in nature. He concluded by saying that although there was still a great need for Caribbean data, many agencies were presently working to correct this information deficit, such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) at the subregional level, governments at the national level and he pointed to the continuous support of ECLAC in this area. He then closed by wishing participants a successful meeting.

**Agenda item 2:
Adoption of agenda and overview of the meeting**

The representative of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean outlined the fact that there was limited analysis of Caribbean data, because data was either unavailable or not readily accessible throughout the region. He noted the need for countries within the region to share data amongst themselves, however, he recognized the sovereignty of each member State to share their data if they so wished.

He then proceeded to outline the specific objectives of the meeting, which included the discussion of the key issues related to data sharing and ownership, the discussion and forging of a consensus on the harmonization of household data sets and the promoting of access to national databases from household surveys and population and housing censuses of the Caribbean electronically via the Internet.

Agenda item 3: Data ownership and data sharing within the CARICOM subregion

The representative of the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) presented the main findings and conclusions of the paper on the need for *Data ownership and data sharing within the CARICOM subregion* on behalf of ECLAC. He noted that data collected, for example data collected by CARICOM National Statistical Agencies (NSAs) were “publicly funded” and therefore should remain a public good, readily accessible for public use. He stated that the capacity for data collection was not lacking in the region, however, the problem arose when funding was not readily available to facilitate the sharing of data. This was usually because data was at times supplied at a cost which, he also noted, was a fair expectation for such desired information.

He further elaborated on some possible hindrances to data sharing within the Caribbean region such as, the financial costs associated with data sharing currently being borne by many NSAs. NSA budgets were usually very limited or “non-existent” in scope which prevented the easy exchange of data from one agency to another. He also noted that other factors also played a role in limiting the easy transfer of data, these included “(1) anxiety about losing control of the data; (2) confidentiality breaches; (3) the level of effort and amount of time required; (4) the risk of poor analysis or re-analyses; (5) a lack of collegial/institutional support for the activity; and (6) a risk that others will profit, even financially, from the agency's data collection efforts”. Another significant impediment to data sharing was the problem of creating a suitable archival system for the easy sharing of data collected; hence the need for harmonization of datasets throughout the region.

He stated that according to Sieber (1998) the data owner who intended to share data, whether on a mandatory or voluntary basis, must consider the following questions: (a) how to resolve issues such as reimbursement for the cost of reproducing data sets, arrangements for necessary communication between donor and recipient, confidentiality of data, and transfer of "know how" to persons wishing to extend the work; (b) appropriate time to prohibit the recipient from using the data in ways that conflicted with the interests of the donor; (c) whether recipients should be prohibited to pass data on to a third party without permission; (d) appropriate time to require of the prospective recipient a proposal stating how the data would be used, or to ask for evidence of competency to carry out that proposed plan; (e) appropriate contractual agreement between data donor and recipient; (f) how to handle requests from scientists employed in commercial firms who will refuse to reciprocate by sharing their findings (g) role of the donor and recipient institutions in formulating and enforcing data-sharing agreements, and the most appropriate research administrators to assist with such agreements; (h) what mechanisms could be used to enforce such agreements; (i) what mechanisms were available for protecting confidentiality, financial interests, and intellectual property rights.

Although all the above points raised were of equal importance the one that posed the most significance to the Caribbean region was that of protecting confidentiality. The representative highlighted the fact that when participants volunteered to partake in surveys, especially those associated with the Surveys of Living Conditions (SLC), they volunteered information on the basis that the information provided would not be released as a public record.

This expectation posed a direct conflict with the Freedom of Information Act which many authorities were opting to introduce into their systems to provide for more extensive public access to information.

This conflict raised the topic of intellectual property and who should maintain ownership of it. The presenter noted that NSAs should retain ownership of the intellectual property specifically because they collected the data. However, he also raised some very important points associated with this ownership. “What about data derived from such surveys? What about the results of the analyses and the rights of secondary researchers to publish these results? These are thorny issues and must be worked out well in advance”.

He then discussed data harmonization and within what type of framework it should be conducted. He noted that there was no doubt that sharing data across the CARICOM subregion would indeed aid the distribution of data among sovereign agencies in addition to third-party users, for example, universities. He acknowledged the fact that harmonization of data helped to improve the consistency and comparability of data collected across varying systems of collection. He noted that harmonization helped to reduce the occurrence of duplicated information or mismatched data and created a consistent format across systems within the region. This form of harmonizing should include applying universal definitions and values to the elements included in the information collected to ensure the improvement of the quality of the data and its stability.

He concluded his presentation by discussing recommendations for data sharing and some of the consequences of misuse of data and misallocation of national resources when data was not used in the manner for which they were designed. His recommendations were based on the negative consequences adapted from Stanley and Stanley (1988). The main point referred to the fact that data sharing should at all times remain a voluntary activity, with the primary researcher or NSA retaining the right to permit or refuse access to data collected. Guidelines also needed to be developed to offer a smooth transition when secondary analysts were allowed to review the data. In cases where contradictory findings arose, this would provide a controlled arena in which both parties could discuss or refute the discrepancies prior to public release. To avoid misuse of data, it was also noted that NSAs should be allowed to evaluate the requester’s credentials and overall ability to analyze and interpret the data and also gain information on the ethical standards of the requester.

Elaborating further on this topic, the presenter also addressed issues specific to CARICOM NSAs. He made note of the fact that governments needed to take into consideration the improvement of allocation within their budgets to the NSAs. This, he reiterated, would help to enhance the capabilities of the agencies with reference to ‘data sharing’. Data sharing costs should also be transferred as much as possible to ‘secondary’ users, for example local universities. Stringent rules were needed on the commercial use of data by recipients to avert the abuse of public property for private gain. He also mentioned that CARICOM NSAs needed to completely harmonize the collection, seizure, storage and dissemination of all data, and CARICOM should move towards the establishment of a CARICOM statistical agency, which would function as an umbrella body for the region.

Agenda item 4:
Issues in data sharing and ownership - Discussion

In discussing the need for data sharing and data ownership the meeting felt that CARICOM governments needed to be more willing to invest public funds into the area of data collection, because of the benefits it would supply to economic and social development. The general consensus that arose from the presentation suggested that CARICOM NSAs were not equipped to carry out such an arduous task of data collection and processing solely and should be willing to share the data collection and processing aspect with secondary specialists within the region who had in-house capabilities that could be used to assist in the processing of data.

In relation to the issue of the statistical capacity of NSAs, concern was raised about the difficulty currently encountered by statistical offices in attracting trained personnel and the ability of the offices to retain staff. It was noted that training programmes offered for personnel of statistical offices by institutions such as the University of Technology (UTEC) were no longer subsidized and, as such, had limited the number of persons who enrolled for those programmes. The issue of sustainability was raised in view of the high rates of turn-over in statistical offices. Greater sustainability/capacity training and building was also needed on the national level, because of the prevalence of limited trained personnel and the constant movement of said personnel from one organization to another creating a greater need for longevity of personnel and an overall deficit of trained persons within field of statistics/data collection. In general, a larger number of persons needed to be trained in the area of statistics throughout the region. In addition, a call was made for the forging of closer collaboration between universities and NSOs as a means of ensuring that the programmes offered by those institutions, in areas such as demography and social statistics, were tailored to reflect the needs of statistical offices.

Participants endorsed the need for a single repository or database for Caribbean data. The representative of the OECS disclosed an initiative currently being undertaken by the OECS Secretariat in designing such a data facility for OECS countries. In that regard it was recommended that ECLAC should spearhead an initiative to design a data facility to store, retrieve and disseminate data from Caribbean countries. The data would be submitted by NSAs or official agencies from each country. The suggested location for storing this database was the OECS Secretariat; ECLAC should provide support in its maintenance. However, it was noted that ownership of data sets should remain the property of the organization that had collected the data and the organization should retain the right to decide to whom the data would be released for further analysis. Retaining this ownership right and scrutiny of secondary users would help to ensure that the integrity and confidentiality of the data were maintained.

Another vital point noted at the meeting was the need for additional international guidelines/standardization for countries to adopt with reference to methodologies for querying databases. In that regard, reference was made to the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) initiated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). It was mentioned that the new version of DevInfo, version 5.0, conformed to standardized information sharing models for metadata storage and dissemination. These metadata standards helped achieve efficiency by facilitating data exchange and harmonizing international and national data sets. They

decentralized data maintenance, lowered the reporting burden on data producers and reduced duplication of effort. They fostered use of more timely and better quality data. DevInfo 5.0 was compliant with three international metadata standards for indicators, data sources and digital maps: SDMX (ISO 17369:2005), DDI and ISO 11179:2003 for metadata on digital map.

Participants also acknowledged the fact that more formal arrangements needed to be instituted between countries and international organizations for the sharing of data. Both parties needed to establish a means of respecting the other's privacy concerns. Some means of placing restrictions on which aspect of the data would be shared or used needed to be created. For example, whether only half the information would be used versus the entire data collected, if so desired by the "owner" country.

Another issue of overriding concern to the participants was the maintenance of respondent confidentiality as it was essential especially when sharing micro data sets. The anonymization of data was identified as one mechanism for protecting respondent confidentiality. However, absence of information or guidance on anonymizing data was strongly lamented. In addition, a concern was raised about the possibility of losing data through anonymization because of the small size of the countries. It was recommended by the meeting that regional organizations should mobilize training for appropriate staff of regional offices on the anonymization of data. In addition to training, it was recommended that guidelines be developed on how best to maintain anonymity in this area. The issue stemming from the conflict that arose between the Statistics Act and Freedom of Information Act was noted as another sore point. While it was recognized that all efforts must be made to protect the confidentiality of the respondents, it was duly noted that "collecting data and allowing it to languish on a shelf served very little purpose to the Statistics offices".

The meeting also noted that quantitative data collection was limited since figures only provided a uni-dimensional perspective. In that regard, it was recommended that qualitative methods which would give a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being investigated be incorporated in research methodology.

Several participants made reference to the absence of CARICOM from the forum and noted that CARICOM's input would have been critical since it was one of the main organizations which represented the interest of countries throughout the region. A general recommendation was made that the discussions and conclusions of the meeting be communicated to CARICOM. The role of CARICOM and its link with ECLAC needed to be examined more closely and more frequent discussions of issues needed to occur to identify the underlying systems at all levels.

Key recommendations

(a) Regional agencies should invest resources in the training of staff from statistical offices, the development of statistical methods on larger countries, as well as capacity-building.

(b) Given that the problems encountered by NSAs across the region were not necessarily uniform, regional agencies should consider conducting a needs assessment which would inform areas of assistance.

(c) Absence of CARICOM from forum - discussions and conclusions of the meeting should be communicated to CARICOM.

(d) The Statistics Act should be revised so as to encourage the dissemination of information as well as incorporate the rights and responsibilities of all parties. The revised act should allow for the sharing of micro data especially for research purposes.

Agenda item 5: Collection, management and sharing of migration-related data in the Caribbean

The Population Affairs Officer, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, introduced her presentation by outlining the background of her project. She stated that for migration purposes Caribbean countries acted as immigration, emigration and transit countries. However, within the region the management of migration was hindered by the lack of timely, objective and reliable statistics on migration in the region, and collection efforts were not systematic and varied vastly from one country to another.

The objectives of the research being conducted on migration aimed to develop both national and regional authorities' capacity to amass, manage and distribute migration-related data, in an attempt to enhance national and regional policy-making. Some of the activities being conducted included building national capacity and developing plans to update information technology (IT) infrastructure and collaborating with intergovernmental bodies, such as CARICOM, the Regional Negotiating Machinery (RNM) to fortify Data Sharing Mechanisms (DSMs).

At the national level, she informed that the project intended to identify actors involved in the process, map the status of data collection, evaluate the capacity-building and data collection needs in four to five countries, and make assessments in terms of needs for IT infrastructure and capacity-building for officials. At the regional level, the project hoped to assess the needs and modalities for data sharing at the regional level and aid in designing and agreeing upon a set of variables which would be shared and eventually lead to the development of a module for data sharing.

She closed her presentation by outlining some of the end results that the project hoped to achieve. These included contributing to the advancement in collection management and overall access to migration statistics and the enhancement of both national and regional policy-making within the Caribbean region.

**Agenda item 6:
Overview of household survey project and presentation on
harmonization of survey data and methodologies**

The Statistician at the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean gave an overview of the ECLAC-commissioned project on *“Improving Caribbean Household Survey”* which sought to improve the comparability of social statistics in the Caribbean by ensuring international standards of comparability. He noted that the objectives of the project were in tandem with the Support to Poverty Assessment and Reduction in the Caribbean (SPARC) initiative which sought to support collection of social data for poverty assessment, monitoring and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the Caribbean. He also highlighted the four main outputs of the project which included: (a) an Expert Group Meeting; (b) data collection, analysis and harmonization; (c) a regional training workshop on harmonization tools and Internet-based dissemination and processing of micro data; and (d) dissemination of micro data and meta data via the ECLAC Santiago Household Survey Databank (BADEHOG). In addition, a timeline of the project activities was disclosed.

He then proceeded to elaborate on why the harmonization of statistics was important in the subregion. He defined harmonization as “the process of establishment, recognition and application of internationally recognized measures or standards” and emphasized the fact that harmonization improved the overall quality of data collected. This improvement in data quality allowed for more reliable data collection, faster production of results and promoted comparability of data, which would be a benefit throughout the Caribbean region. In addition, he stressed the difference between harmonization and standardization, where the former allowed for some deviations depending on prevailing national circumstances, whereas the latter required exact copies of procedures and methodologies. He noted that steps towards harmonization had already been put into place and were started by the CARICOM Secretariat in 2003 at the CARICOM Secretariat meeting hosted in Grenada. This move towards harmonization was evident in the work of organizations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and CARICOM that coordinated efforts in harmonizing data in the areas of labour/employment and population censuses, respectively. He concluded his presentation by providing an outline of the status of harmonization in the Caribbean and an overview of the activities to be carried out by ECLAC in further promoting harmonization at a regional level.

Discussion

There was a measure of consensus among participants on the need for harmonization, especially on the basis of the advances made in that direction by a few Caribbean countries through initiatives undertaken by some regional agencies and institutions. Specific reference was made to steps in achieving harmonization on a smaller scale through the administration of common instruments, such as the poverty assessments conducted by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the Multiple Indicator Cluster (MICS) surveys coordinated by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). Notwithstanding that, a point of contention for some participants, was the extent to which regional harmonization was attainable in view of the fact that there was still little or no harmonization among agencies at a national/country level. In that

regard, an appeal was made for United Nations agencies to mobilize resources with the aim of achieving harmonization at a national or country level before extending it to a regional level.

Agenda item 7:
Country presentations on household survey experiences

(i) *Surveys of Living Conditions – Measurement issues, concepts and methods: Saint Lucia*

The representative of Saint Lucia presented his findings on SLC – Measurement Issues, Concepts and Methods. He opened his presentation by defining poverty as a situation when one or more persons did not attain a level of material well-being deemed to constitute a reasonable minimum by the standards of that society.

He noted that household surveys acted as the most vital source of collecting data about poverty and living conditions. This was because this type of survey allowed for the collection of data which informed researchers on the manner in which the standard of living was being distributed throughout a society. He informed that many Caribbean countries did in fact undertake a SLC or a Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS) up till 2003.

It was noted that the questionnaire design for SLCs had remained relatively constant throughout Central Development Banks and the Trinidad and Tobago SLC. The questionnaire design encompassed questions on health, inclusive of risky behaviours, such as excessive drinking and smoking legal or illegal drugs, crime, life style, and technological developments. Many of the SLCs were designed to consider the specific situation of the particular country as it related to immigration status, and even had been designed to distinguish between chronic and other types of diseases of a lesser nature. He highlighted that SLCs had also incorporated an education section into the questionnaire and included questions that varied differently principally at the tertiary level of education to facilitate the specific needs of a particular Caribbean country. As a result of the broad design of the categories of primary, secondary and tertiary education levels it provided an ample opportunity for harmonization at a wider level.

He incorporated into his presentation a segment on the various types of indices that were used to calculate poverty measures in Caribbean studies based on living conditions proposed by Foster, Greer and Thorbecke (1984). These indices included the Head Count Index, The Poverty Gap Index and the Foster-Greer-Thorbecke P2 Index (“Poverty Severity Index”). He also presented a segment on the various types of indices that were used to calculate poverty measures in Caribbean studies based on living conditions proposed by Foster, Greer and Thorbecke (1984). These indices included the Head Count Index, The Poverty Gap Index and the Foster-Greer-Thorbecke P2 Index (“Poverty Severity Index”). The Head Count Index which was defined as the proportion of the population for whom consumption was less than the poverty line, was deemed the most commonly used measure of poverty since it specifically measured the prevalence of poverty. It was, however, noted that despite the popularity of the Head Count Index, it had serious drawbacks which included a violation of the monotonicity axiom postulated

by Sen (1976) which stated that “given other things, a reduction in the income of a poor household must increase the poverty measure”. The Poverty Gap Index was thus identified as a better measure of poverty since according to Foster, Greer and Thorbecke (1984) it provided a good indication of depth of poverty since it was a function of the distances of the poor below the poverty line and did not violate Sen’s monotonicity axiom. He elaborated on the fact that the poverty gap index could be defined in uncomplicated terms as when a person who was below the poverty line was given just enough money to get him or her above the poverty line, therefore, the poverty gap would be zero and the head count would be zero, representing the minimum cost of eradicating poverty using targeted transfers.

The Poverty Severity Index which measured the degree of inequality among the poor was discussed. In concluding his presentation, he touched on the measures of inequality as defined by the Lorenz curve and its summary statistic called the Gini coefficient.

(ii) Outline of Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS): Suriname

The representative of Suriname presented her paper on the MICS used by the General Bureau of Statistics in Suriname. She opened her presentation by briefly mentioning the various types of surveys conducted in Suriname, which included the Current Population Survey (CPS), conducted as a quarterly labour force survey and the MICS conducted in 2000 and 2006.

She noted that the MICS was carried out by order of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing in 2000, by an independent consultant and then repeated in 2006 by the General Bureau of Statistics. To ensure the success of the survey in both instances, technical and financial assistance was provided by UNICEF.

She described the MICS and how it originated and stated that it was a household survey used to measure the Millennium Development Goals and other indicators based on a cluster sample design. The main focus of the MICS was on the health of children and mothers/women, and it was designed to incorporate the entire country as much as possible. Questionnaires used were distributed to each household used in the sample, to women aged 15 – 49 years and to providers of children aged zero to four years. She pointed out that the MICS was developed by UNICEF in response to the World Summit for Children (WSC) hosted in 1990 and it was devised to compute the progress made towards an internationally fixed set of goals. Since the initial conducting of the MICS in 1995, it had been scheduled to be conducted every five years worldwide, however, it would possibly be changed to being conducted every three years.

During her presentation, she outlined the significance of the MICS, stating that it provided estimates countrywide versus being conducted solely in inhabited segments of Suriname. The MICS also provided information about approximately 20 of the 48 Millennium Development Goal indicators, in addition to providing a method of measuring progress in attaining the various objectives set by policy makers.

Her discussion of the MICS incorporated the aspects included in the questionnaire designed by UNICEF which consisted of core modules, additional modules (for example, female

genital cutting module) and optional modules (for example, maternal mortality module). She then proceeded to elaborate on some of the challenges faced by Suriname when the MICS was conducted in 2000 and 2006.

In 2000, the translation of the questionnaire manuals and all training and fieldwork materials into Dutch was not only time consuming but was not calculated into the budget for the survey. Field operations in the interior of the country proved more costly than the entire survey and the small unit used to execute the survey was overwhelmed with the intense workload created by the execution of the survey. Many of the challenges faced in 2000 also carried over into 2006, due to the unexpected flooding of the interior of Suriname, forcing the postponement of the survey. Another challenge meted out to the staff was the lack of manpower available resulting from the simultaneous execution of other projects, such as census publications and the Informal Sector Survey. This lack of assistance resurrected the problem faced in 2000 of an overwhelming workload for the small executing unit.

Although there were many challenges in executing the MICS, overall it was still a good tool for the harmonization of data. The MICS acted as a good example because the definitions used were clear, methodology was specified, the model data processing programmes and syntaxes developed by UNICEF for the MICS (example, data entry) could be adjusted based on the adjustments made to the questionnaires and the dissemination tool used by the model MICS can be customized, to suit a specific database (for example DEVInfo).

She concluded her presentation by disclosing that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing of Suriname remained the custodian for the MICS, but any interested parties/organizations could contact that ministry to obtain copies of the MICS datasets.

(iii) Barbados' Experiences with the Conduct of Labour Force Surveys

The representative of Barbados provided an overview of the meta data and methodologies used in conducting the Labour Force Survey (LFS), challenges encountered in the survey execution and the overall results and outcomes, inclusive of use and comparability.

He explained that the Continuous Labour Force Sample Survey (CLFSS) was conducted by the Statistical Service under the provisions of the Statistics Act CAP 192. The CLFSS sought to obtain socio-economic data on the adult population of the country (15 years and over), who were possibly in the Labour Force, either employed or unemployed, or who might be classified as being inactive (not in the Labour Force). He noted that the survey only covered the resident, non institutional population of the island and was two stages in design.

He noted that the first stage of the design comprised Phase 1 which started in October 1975 and used a sample of 26 Enumeration Districts (EDs) out of a total of 340 EDs. Phase 2 of the survey started in 1980 with a sample of 45 EDs; followed by Phase 3 in 1990 after the 1990 Population and Housing Census and comprised the 11 parishes stratified into four strata-samples reduced to 40 EDs and then by Phase 4, which was conducted after the 2000 Population and Housing Census and used 45 EDs, with the same sample design. The second stage of the sample

design used an average of 40 households sampled from each ED, in every Round (quarter), that is, a total of approximately 1800 households (2 per cent of the total number of private households in the island).

One of the main components of this type of survey involved the use of a schedule referred to as Schedule 0. Schedule 0 was a listing of households used to construct a sample frame of the various private households in each ED or Second Stage Sample Frame, and facilitates the selection of a sample of households each quarter. The information collected from Schedule 0 was used to prepare a separate Sample Listing Sheet, made up of all the households chosen for the particular sample in each Round of the survey.

The survey was distributed in the form of a two-part questionnaire, Form 1 referred to as the Household Members Schedule and Form 2 referred to as the Individual Schedule. Form 1 was used to list all household members and other details, some of which were transferred to Form 2. Form 2, however, was completed for each member of the household, that is, a resident of the household, 15 years and over and encompassed two components, Forms 2 and 2b. Form 2b was slightly shorter in length and was completed in instances where a vacant dwelling unit was encountered, in cases where an entire household refused to provide any information, or when no contact was made with any member of a particular household after several attempts.

Upon receipt of the completed questionnaires from the respective field staff, the office staff would then verify, code, and enter the data collected into the computer system. The computer software used in this data entry process was the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), which was used to generate the desired tables using ratio estimation techniques to tabulate the data collected. Mr. Browne pointed to the use of the following international classifications, as a means of ensuring comparability:

- (a) For industry (ISIC Rev. 3/BARSIC);
- (b) Occupation (ISOC/BARSOC);
- (c) Education and employment status.

He highlighted that with every data collection process there were challenges that accompanied the survey execution phase. In the case of the CLFSS, ensuring a good representation of household samples was one of the major challenges encountered. He noted that the sequential numbering of Dwelling Units (DU) in each category, within the sample frame, which ensured that occupied DUs were numbered before vacant ones posed another problem. He alluded to the fact that it was necessary to determine sampling intervals and ensure that households were systematically chosen to ensure that each category was represented in the sample. The minimization of non-response of households was an additional challenge faced in the execution phase, especially in the instances of repeat visits in subsequent quarters. He suggested that this problem could be alleviated through publicity, via news media and flyers requesting participation from households.

He indicated that resulting from the data collected from the survey, quarterly and annual bulletins were produced. The LFS results were then disseminated to:

- (a) Government ministries;
- (b) The Central Bank;
- (c) Trade unions and employers;
- (d) Individuals and the public;
- (e) Regional and international organizations

He concluded his presentation by elaborating on some of the definitions used in the LFS, including:

(a) ***Employed Labour Force*** – According to ILO 1982 definitions of employment, employment was comprised of all persons above the age specified for measuring the economically active population who during a specified period, the reference period (one week), performed a minimum of an hour's work for pay or profit.

(b) ***Unemployed labour Force*** – (the international standard is based on three criteria):

- (i) Without work – not in any paid, employment or self employment;
- (ii) Available for work during survey period;
- (iii) Seeking work – have taken specific steps to seek paid employment or self employment.

(c) ***Inactive Persons*** – These included persons who might be at school, retired, incapacitated, keeping house and did not want to work although they could work.

Key recommendations included:

- (a) The importance of reducing non-response in sample households used;
- (b) Sample rotation over consecutive quarters (50 per cent rotation);
- (c) Ensuring that ILO guidelines and use of international classifications for comparability were observed.

(iv) *Household surveys: The Bahamas*

The representative of The Bahamas noted that household surveys had been conducted annually in The Bahamas since 1988, except in census years. The annual household surveys conducted were the Labour Force and the Household Income surveys; in addition to the more recent Household Expenditure and Living Conditions Surveys (2006/2007).

According to international definitions, households were defined as arrangements made by persons, individually or in groups, for providing themselves with food and other essentials for living. Households consisted of a family with or without lodgers or servants, or a person living alone. However, a group of unrelated persons living together or persons living in institutions, hotels or other quarters were excluded. It was noted that for the purpose of the Household Survey, the individuals included in the survey were as follows:

- (a) Everyone who usually lived in the household such as family members, lodgers and live-in employees;
- (b) Persons who were temporarily away on business trips or vacation or in a general hospital;
- (c) Persons away in school or university, with the exception of the Household Expenditure Survey in which they were excluded.

In The Bahamas a dwelling unit was synonymous with household, that is, a household was said to occupy a dwelling unit. The representative explained that a dwelling unit was therefore classified as a structurally separate living quarters with a common private entrance from the outside or from a common hall, lobby or stairway inside a building. For a dwelling unit to be considered a legitimate dwelling unit, the entrance must not pass through someone else's living quarters, for example, each single house, each half of a duplex and each self-contained apartment, flat or suite in an apartment block.

In the case of the Labour Force Survey, the labour force was defined as all persons 15 years and over who were classified as employed or unemployed. For the purpose of the survey employed persons were:

- (a) All persons who worked for any length of time for pay or profit during the reference week
- (b) Unpaid family workers if they worked for at least one hour during the reference week in a family business/enterprise.

Unemployed persons were considered:

- (a) Persons who did not work nor did they have jobs from which they were temporarily absent during the reference week

(b) Persons must actually be looking for work in the four weeks prior to the survey week and were able and willing to work.

The Bahamas defined its poverty line as an absolute line which represented the minimum amount of money necessary to purchase an adequate low-cost diet based on 2,400 kilo-calories for an adult; and the “poor” were referred to as any household where per-capita was below the poverty line.

It was highlighted that the main objectives of the 2006/2007 Household Expenditure Survey conducted were:

- (a) To provide data on income level and expenditure of households in The Bahamas;
- (b) To provide data for the use in compilation of the national accounts and estimates of private consumptions expenditures of households;
- (c) To provide data for poverty analysis and research;
- (d) To provide data for health and safety network programmes;
- (e) To collect information for the revision of weights, and the selection of a relevant basket of goods and services to up-date the Consumer Price Index.

The survey design used utilized updated census data as a frame and was a three staged stratified sample. It covered 2,000 households throughout the country, representing approximately 2.3 per cent of the total households. It also comprised six strata based on the size of the population. Stratum 1 - New Providence; Stratum 2 – Grand Bahama; Stratum 3 – Abaco; Stratum 4 – Andro, Eleuthera inclusive of Harbour Island; Stratum 5 – Exuma, Long Island; and Stratum 6 – all other islands. Strata 1 – 3 accounted for 88.3 per cent of the total households in the country. Strata 1- 3 also were used to collect monthly prices, while Strata 4 – 6 were over sampled because of their small size but was justified in its attempt to capture “better” poverty indicators.

To ensure that the surveys were executed in the most efficient manner, intensive training programmes were instituted consisting of four one-week sessions, three in New Providence and one in Grand Bahama. Resulting from the comprehensive nature of the survey, surveys were conducted during the day (a full day) to ensure that sufficient time was allotted to the execution process. As a result of a lack of permanent staff, The Bahamas had to employ temporary and part-time workers to assist in the process.

She closed her presentation by outlining some of the major challenges encountered in administering the surveys. These included:

- (a) Inability to contact all household members even though announcements were made publicly to indicate that information was being sought from the respective individuals;

(b) During the execution phase persons were unable to itemize clothing costs, especially in households where extended families existed.

(c) Gifts given to the household were overlooked or underestimated;

(d) The execution process was hampered due to a shortage of enumerators;

(e) Home grown products were under-recorded as enumerators did not probe into this area sufficiently;

(f) Many of the households could not recall the age of the furniture, thus were unable to apply a resale value to said items;

(g) Some members of households refused to cooperate and preferred to report only bulk purchases; and

(h) Supervisor edits suggested that certain types of expenditure reported were under-reported while others were exaggerated.

In closing, she also noted that the data cleaning process took three times longer than was originally scheduled, since missing data had to be imputed and incorrect data had to be rectified or eliminated. She, however, stated that measures were being implemented to rectify some of the problems encountered, in an attempt to prevent recurrence in future surveys.

Discussion

The meeting felt that there was a need to further define what was meant by a dwelling unit. Although, the representative had defined a “dwelling unit as a structurally separate living quarter with a common private entrance from the outside or from a common hall, lobby or stairway inside a building” the consensus of the participants was that the words “household” and “dwelling unit” were being used interchangeably by The Bahamas and a more conscious effort should be made on The Bahamas’ part to ensure that both remained and were used as separate defining entities. The representative of The Bahamas attempted to clarify this concern by reiterating that a household, as referred to in the definitions for the survey, was comprised of all family members, inclusive of married children and was considered to be one household as long as they ate at least one meal together; while a dwelling unit was a physical structure, in which the household resided.

(v) *The Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (JSLC)*

The representative of Jamaica opened her presentation by providing an overview of the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (JSLC). She noted that the JSLC was established as a joint project between the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) and the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) and that the project came on stream in July 1988, with technical assistance being provided by the World Bank in conjunction with other international agencies. The JSLC was

initially intended to be conducted as a semi-annual survey, however, was later changed to be executed annually since the data collected on an annual basis was considered sufficient. Resulting from that decision, the survey had been carried out annually since its inception in 1988.

She indicated that the initial purpose of the JSLC was to provide data for the household level, in an attempt to aid the Jamaican Government in effectively evaluating its policies towards the living conditions of the general population. The management of the JSLCs consisted of the combined efforts of a steering committee comprised of members of PIOJ, STATIN, the social sector ministries (health, education and labour) and the University of the West Indies (UWI). The JSLCs planning process took one year, which was deemed necessary to ensure that appropriate adjustments were made to questionnaires, in the event that new modules were introduced and for the expansion of the committee for the planning of special modules.

She noted that the JSLC was used to provide not only household level data but, also to assist in the measurement of the poverty line, to aid in the establishment of baseline measures of household welfare and to monitor the impact of Jamaica's Human Resource Development Programme (HRDP) geared towards health, education and nutrition. Outside of the specific information, the survey also allowed for the collection of data which was used to estimate poverty lines and assist in the formulation of initiatives directed towards social policy and alleviating poverty in Jamaica. Out of the information gathered programmes, such as the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH-Program), had been instituted to provide aid to children, the elderly poor, pregnant mothers, the disabled and the destitute poor.

She explained that the survey instrument for this type of survey was in the form of a household questionnaire encompassing the following main sections: general health, education, anthropometric measurements (children <5 years), daily expenses, food expenses, housing conditions and related expenses, inventory of durable goods owned, miscellaneous income received by the household, non-food consumption expenditure, special module (if any) and the household roster.

In the case of the sample design, the design was similar to that used for the LFS and comprised the following features:

- “A two-staged stratified random sample with the first stage being a selection of Enumeration Districts (EDs) and the second stage a selection of dwellings.
- Enumeration districts are stratified by parish and urban/rural demarcation and are selected by probability proportionate to size (PPS)”.

The sample size normally consisted of 2,560 dwellings but every four to five years (periodic basis) increased to the size of the LFS (8128 dwellings). The target population, however, was inclusive of the head of household and any respondent as specified by the special module. The point was also raised that 10 out of the 32 indicators for Goals one through seven of the Millennium Development Goals were compiled from the JSLC.

She concluded her presentation by briefly outlining the lessons learnt/key recommendations gathered from the survey:

- (a) Varying the households used when conducting annual surveys, as a means of minimizing respondent fatigue;
- (b) Training was required annually to ensure the efficient execution of the survey;
- (c) Each survey must be conducted as though it were a new one; each level must be allotted equal amounts of effort yearly;
- (d) The use of consistent methodology was vital and;
- (e) In order to maintain sustainability, commitment and sufficient resources were required.

Agenda item 8: Introduction to BADEHOG and BADEINSO

During this session, the representative of ECLAC Headquarters made a presentation on the workings of BADEHOG and BADEINSO, two of the social statistics databases currently used by ECLAC Headquarters. While the aim of the presentation was to enlighten the participants on the workings of those two databases in the Latin American context, it also served to gauge participants' sentiments on the usefulness of those databases for housing of Caribbean household survey datasets.

The Banco de Datos Encuestas de Hogares (BADEHOG) is the household surveys databank developed in 2002 as an instrument for providing access to micro data for the 18 Latin American countries. The contents of the database were micro data from household surveys which date as far back as 1980, as well as the survey manuals and questionnaires for the respective surveys. Its key features included the online processing of data and the generation of data in diverse tabular formats such as frequency tables and/or two and three dimensional tables. In addition to a description of the features of the database and a demonstration of its performance, he addressed the issue of confidentiality as it related to data dissemination and access to micro data, which remained as an area of concern for many Caribbean countries. In that regard, he gave the assurance that the databank was presently being used strictly for internal use. He further noted that a move to providing public access was more futuristic and would be in accordance with the conditions set by the country. On that point, reference was made to the current practices of ECLAC as they related to the different Latin American countries.

In the second part of his presentation, he focused on the Base de Datos de Indicadores Sociales (BADEINSO), the social statistics and indicators database which formed part of ECLAC's online database portal called CEPALSTAT. In terms of its genesis and contents, he indicated that BADEINSO was developed as part of the United Nations-funded Network of

Institutions and Experts on Social and Environmental Statistics (REDESA) project and featured 130 social indicators for Latin American and Caribbean countries in areas such as demography, education, health, housing, employment and wages, poverty and income distribution, economy and the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, the database contained technical notes with definitions, methodology and comments on each indicator; a data query system which allowed users to generate customized reports based on their specifications and links to the databases and web pages from which the social indicators were sourced. To supplement his discourse, he provided participants with a demonstration of the features of BADEINSO which highlighted the efficiency of the database in generating tabular data as well as a display of graphing abilities of the database.

Discussion

Taking account of the points presented by the ECLAC representative about what obtained between ECLAC and its Latin American member countries and in full cognition of the overall objective of the forum to promote data sharing among Caribbean countries, a number of issues were raised. Among them was the concern about the level of informality of the relations which existed between ECLAC and the Latin American countries as it related to data sharing. In that regard, participants strongly expressed the need for more formal arrangements. This was raised especially in view of the fact that some imputations were performed on the data and, as a result, the modification of the countries official statistics. While participants were assured the imputations were done solely on income because of the lack of good data on income for Latin American countries, there was still a level of concern on the process. To that end, it was recommended that official sources of data from the countries should be informed of any imputations or adjustments made. The issues were raised against the backdrop of past experiences with other multilateral institutions such as the IMF. In addition, concerns were raised about the extent to which multilateral institutions made data sharing a larger priority over capacity-building.

The exclusion of gender indicators from the BADEINSO was singled out as a concern for ECLAC representatives. This was of particular interest since ECLAC was presently engaged in a gender indicators project which produced 69 indicators which should have been incorporated into BADEINSO. In response, the ECLAC representative indicated that BADEINSO currently housed the most representative indicators of which gender indicators were included but not categorized separately.

Participants also raised the concern about the possible overlap between BADEINSO and DevInfo indicating that they produced similar indicators. On a point of correction from UNICEF, it was noted that there were numerous differences between the two databases. In addition it was noted that DevInfo had numerous advanced capabilities such as generating maps, tables and graphs. The representative of Saint Lucia took the opportunity of the discussion on DevInfo to inform the meeting of the recent launch of Helen Info which was Saint Lucia's adaptation of Dev Info.

Concerns were raised about the steps which could be taken by ECLAC to assist countries in safeguarding against the exploitation of data and protecting data credibility.

Recommendations

- (a) In view of the concerns about the possible overlap in existing databases and initiatives now being undertaken by multilateral organizations, it was recommended that ECLAC should conduct an audit of the existing platforms;
- (b) Formal arrangements needed to be instituted between international organizations and countries for data sharing;
- (c) Guidelines needed to be established to protect country privacy and to safeguard a country's data, in an attempt to avert exploitation.

Agenda item 9: Achieving consensus on data sharing and harmonization

Recommendations of Expert Group Meeting

Out of the roundtable discussion on data sharing and harmonization the meeting agreed upon the following recommendations:

- ***Respondent confidentiality and the anonymization of data***

Regional organizations should mobilize training for appropriate staff of regional offices on the anonymization of data. In addition to training, it was recommended that guidelines be developed on how best to maintain anonymity in this area.

- ***Instituting of policies regarding data sharing***

Formal arrangements needed to be instituted between countries and international organizations for the sharing of data.

- ***Inconsistencies in data published by agencies and National Statistical Organisations (NSO)***

There should be regularization of data shared between international organizations and countries to ensure that datasets provided yielded consistent results with those of what the country had produced.

- ***Single repository for Caribbean data***

ECLAC should spearhead an initiative to design a data facility to store, retrieve and disseminate data from Caribbean countries. The data would be submitted by NSAs or official agencies from each country. The suggested location for storing this data base was the OECS Secretariat; ECLAC should provide support in its maintenance.

- ***Inaccessibility of data produced by government ministries***

NSA/CSOs should be the main repositories of data from government ministries. Data sharing must first start at the national level, for example, local ministries sharing data, before data sharing could be extended to the regional level.

- ***Need for revision of Statistics Act***

The Statistics Act should be revised so as to encourage the dissemination of information but incorporate the rights and responsibilities of all parties. The revised act should allow for the sharing of micro data especially for research purposes.

- ***Collaboration of statistical offices***

An inventory of available surveys in the region should be carried out and hosted in a central repository. This would provide a means of facilitating the collaboration or exchange of information among offices from each statistical office on surveys being conducted by individual offices, along with a timeline of the dates on which the exercises were conducted. This information could be referenced by statistical offices so that they could seek support and allow for an active exchange between statistical offices of meta data, best practices, etc. A specific process also needed to be formulated for distribution of the surveys and circulated to all countries within the region for their input prior to distribution to ensure standardization of the information collected.

- ***Need for training in collection of qualitative data***

Regional agencies should facilitate a strategic alliance between experts in qualitative research from institutions such as UWI and NSOs/agencies for providing training in qualitative methods and manipulating qualitative data. In addition it was recommended that qualitative data needed be designed to capture the perceptions of the local people in order to understand the needs of the people.

- ***Assistance with human resource training and capacity-building***

Regional agencies should invest resources in the training of staff from statistical offices, the development of statistical methods on larger countries, as well as capacity-building. Emphasis was needed in the field of Human Resource Development and clarification was needed as to which area experienced a loss of expertise.

- *Absence of CARICOM from forum*

Discussions and conclusions of the meeting should be communicated to CARICOM. The role of CARICOM and its link with ECLAC needed to be examined more closely and more frequent discussions of issues needed to occur to identify the underlying systems at all levels.

- *Assistance from other United Nations organizations*

The meeting called on regional and international organizations to mobilize training and financial assistance to countries to facilitate surveys, where needed. The establishment of SPARC proposed a corrective measure in the mobilization of support in alleviating some of the possible problems.

The way forward

1. The 15 CDCC member countries which are beneficiaries under the project on “Improving Caribbean Household Surveys” would be approached for access to their household survey datasets.
2. ECLAC would prepare a Letter of Understanding (LOU) between its office and the NSOs in the beneficiary countries, outlining the conditions for data sharing ahead of the data collection exercise. Copies of the proposed LOU would be circulated to member countries for vetting prior to the institutionalizing of those arrangements.
3. ECLAC would engage in discussions with the OECS at the secretariat level.

Agenda item 10:

Knowledge sharing: the experience of the Caribbean Knowledge Management Center

The Chief of the Caribbean Knowledge Management Center (CKMC) and the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean commenced her presentation by alerting the participants to the fact that the Center was renamed CKMC approximately 20 months prior to the Expert Group Meeting to reflect new expectations for the Center. She highlighted the fact that her first address to statisticians was approximately 19 years earlier, in 1989, and she lamented that many of the same challenges faced by librarians and statisticians in 1989 were still prevalent in 2007. These challenges included:

- (a) Demanding clients, more strident in their criticisms of services perceived to be inadequate;
- (b) Inadequate resources;
- (c) Output not always associated with a tangible benefit, so both parties were under constant pressure to prove their worth;

(d) Resources that should be used are diverted to departments considered more modern.

She noted that although there were many similarities between statisticians and librarians, and both parties should consider themselves “information specialists”, however, there were equally important differences that also existed. She singled out that fact that although both parties were equally involved in data collection, librarians focused on disseminating data versus statisticians who focused on the compilation of data.

Acknowledging the differences between librarians and statisticians and understanding the requirement of librarians to act as data disseminators had motivated the CKMC to incorporate a fresh means of ensuring that data was distributed in an effective manner to those seeking it. This had since lead to the commissioning of a Web Portal which offered new services, such as:

- (a) Digital Library (Development related documents under 27 broad headings);
- (b) Website;
- (c) Intranet (electronic subscriptions, bridge to some of our web-based resources);
- (d) Development profiles;
- (e) ICT profiles;
- (f) Skills Bank;
- (g) Communities of practice.

However, she noted that the services outlined in the Web Portal would soon be converted into the new Knowledge Management Portal.

She summed up her presentation by stressing that in order to make continued progress toward rectifying the noticeable deficits in the area of data transfer, cooperation and sustained collaboration between librarians and statisticians was a necessary factor. She expressed that collaboration could be enhanced by the statisticians present at the meeting volunteering their names to the CKMC Skills Bank, and further contemplating working with ECLAC to develop a statistical profile of each country, which would be used to complement the ECLAC development profiles.

Agenda item 11: Closure of the meeting

ECLAC thanked all participants for giving of their time and their contributions to the meeting, which was concluded with the usual exchange of courtesies.

Annex

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ECLAC system

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