

ECLAC/CDCC Meeting of the  
Ad Hoc Expert Group on the SVI Project  
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**REPORT OF THE AD HOC EXPERT GROUP MEETING  
ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL STATISTICAL DATABASES AND A  
METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH FOR A SOCIAL VULNERABILITY INDEX (SVI)  
FOR SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES PROJECT**

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**Introduction**

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean/Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (ECLAC/CDCC) secretariat has been, since January 2001, executing a project on the “*Development of Social Statistical Databases and a Methodological Approach for a Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) for Small Island Developing States*”. The project took a double-pronged approach, consisting of the creation of statistical databases, on the one hand, and the development of a methodological approach for a Social Vulnerability Index (SVI), on the other. This is in response to the articulated needs of governments in the subregion, specifically, and the wider international body of policy makers, in general, for greater availability and a better quality of social statistical data.

A one-day ad hoc expert group meeting was held on 23 September 2002 at the conference room of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, to provide an opportunity for agency partners and stakeholders to be appraised of the progress of the project. The meeting paid special attention to the social statistical databases. The list of participants for the meeting is annexed to this report.

**Agenda item 1:  
Welcome**

Ms. Len Ishmael, Director, ECLAC Subregional Office for the Caribbean, welcomed participants to the meeting, pointing to the importance of the project, which sought to meet the demand of member States for data that were reliable, accessible, comparable and which supported social analysis. She pointed to the general endorsement of the project by member States and suggested that one of the benefits that could arise from the construction of the databases was the development of common approaches for tackling statistical problems, which continued to beset the region.

The Director took the opportunity, on behalf of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat, to extend her gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for their support in making the project possible. She also thanked the national statistical offices for their cooperation and demonstrated trust in making the data available to the project.

**Agenda item 2:  
Approval of agenda and organization of work**

The meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Welcome
2. Approval of agenda and organization of work
3. Report on the status of the project
4. Review of training agenda
5. Update on SVI
6. The way forward for the next project cycle

**Agenda item 3:  
Report on the status of the project**

The status of the project was presented to participants. The ECLAC/CDCC secretariat reported on the process and achievements of the project; the construction of the databases and related issues, as well issues of storage, hardware and software; and issues of data quality.

**The project: Process and achievements**

Participants were reminded of the specific objectives of the project, namely:

(a) To create, maintain and use a fully searchable social database at the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean;

(b) To build capacity at the national and subregional levels for the monitoring and evaluation of social vulnerability among small open economies of the Caribbean through linkages with national and regional databases on social statistics and the training of social planners in the use of social statistics for policy formulation;

(c) To make available to policy makers in the subregion a comparative analytical framework based on the available social data for informed social policy development relevant to poverty eradication, social equity and gender equality and the eradication of violence against women; and

(d) To complete the quantitative and analytic work on the most appropriate methodological approach for a social vulnerability index within the parameters of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) framework.

The outputs that were achieved in both components of the project were also identified.

Creation of social statistical databases

- (a) An ad hoc advisory committee was formed to advise the project team on possible ways of dealing with issues surrounding this project;
- (b) Four meetings, including this one, were held to address these issues;
- (c) Ten countries were visited and meetings held with their directors of statistics to acquaint them with the project objectives. These countries included – Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Netherlands Antilles, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago
- (d) A brochure on the Caribbean Subregional Social Statistical Databases was produced;
- (e) The development of Data Collection Systems for Domestic Violence (LC/CAR/G.691);
- (f) A Compendium of Social Statistics was published. Apart from the publication and analysis of tables, the publication pointed to some of the social policy implications arising from the published data; and
- (g) Three functional databases, containing the datasets of the countries mentioned previously were constructed.

Methodological approach for a social vulnerability index (SVI)

- (a) Two consultants were contracted for this exercise. Ms. Linda Hewitt conducted the preliminary phase of this project and Dr Godfrey St. Bernard was contracted for the second phase;
- (b) An ad hoc advisory committee was formed to assist the project team in fleshing out the issues arising from this project;
- (c) Three meetings, including this one, were held to address these issues; and
- (d) A preliminary report was produced.

Participants were also led through the process by which the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean received its mandate and support for this project from governments in the region, as well as the process of data collections and issues related to this process.

## Mandate

The project received its mandate initially from the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, World Summit for Social Development, 6-12 March 1995. Commitment 9d, in which member States committed to “ensure that reliable statistics and statistical indicators are used to develop and assess social policies and programmes so that economic and social resources are used efficiently and effectively”, and Commitment 10, which called on regional commissions, in cooperation with regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations and banks, *inter alia* to “pursue such mechanisms and measures as are necessary and appropriate to assist governments in meeting their commitments”. In August 1999, the Social Development Unit, of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, formally submitted a project outline for the development of subregional social statistical databases and the construction of the SVI for Dutch funding, through an ECLAC mechanism. Funds became available in January 2001. During the interim period a survey was conducted to ascertain, among other things, the best platform for such a project in terms of software, hardware, extent and type of training undertaken in the subregion to date, and type of training, if any, required.

Governmental support for the project was articulated at the subregional level at the eighteenth meeting of the CDCC, held from 30 March to 1 April 2000, at the ministerial level. This was formalised through resolution 52(XVII) introduced by Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis and Aruba and which was supported by all governments present. In that resolution governments *inter alia*, recognised the importance of economic and social data to the planning and policy formulation process in CDCC countries

To begin the formal implementation of the project an Expert Group Meeting was convened on 12-13 February 2001 followed immediately, on 14 February, by an inter- agency meeting. Nineteen experts drawn from the national and subregional levels, together with representatives of some six United Nations agencies, participated in those two meetings (LC/CAR/G.646 and 647). The broad purpose of which was to ensure that:

- (a) Key stakeholders in the subregion who were involved in the collection, storage, dissemination and use of social statistics would be informed of the operations of the project;
- (b) The project could benefit from a broad interdisciplinary team of experts who would critique and lend shape to the design and implementation of the project; and
- (c) A truly collaborative framework would be established for the duration of the project.

All of the outputs from the processes described above informed the final shaping of the project. This fleshed out project was presented to the governments at a number of forums in the subregion resulting in the project receiving overwhelming support. The most significant of those interventions was the joint ECLAC and Caribbean Community (CARICOM) presentation of the project made before the Council of Human and Social Development (COHSOD), Fifth Ministerial Meeting of 3-5 October 2001. A full report of ECLAC’s presentation was captured in the report of the COHSOD in paragraphs 107 to 113, pages 50 and 51. The details of the

project were presented for COHSOD information and approval. Support of the COHSOD was received and governments expressed a desire, particularly, to be kept informed of the timing of the training, so that they could make the most of the opportunity when it presented itself.

### Collection of data

In sharing the process of collecting the data for the project, the secretariat spoke to the responses of countries to requests for datasets, as well as the actual logistics of acquiring these datasets. It also identified what, in the experience of the project, were the absolute requirements for understanding the data collected:

(a) **Culture of sharing data in the Caribbean:** The responses to requests for datasets for the Social Statistics Databases Project were varied. Two kinds of responses on the part of the countries to which requests were made became obvious. On the one hand, there was immediate enthusiasm for the project and its objectives from some countries, accompanied by a readiness to share data, once adequate provisions were put in place for the protection of the privacy of the population. For others, there was hesitation to part with the datasets, accompanied by negotiations concerning what portions of the datasets country offices were prepared to give to ECLAC. Notwithstanding this, during the execution of the project, it was discovered that private individuals from outside of the region have had access to and possession of datasets belonging to countries to which neither country officials nor researchers have had access.

(b) **The logistics of acquiring datasets from countries:** Before embarking on the collection of data from countries in the region, ECLAC sought to first understand the legislative constraints that might face Directors of Statistics in releasing these datasets. The laws for most of the countries in the region were similar and made clear that Directors were free to release data as long as they were able to ensure the confidentiality of data concerning individuals. In the case of the project, this was done by entering into a binding contract with the consenting countries, in which ECLAC promised not to release such data at the level of the individual without the prior consent of the Director of Statistics of the country concerned. The secretariat informed participants that before collecting country datasets, ECLAC had also made every effort to have face-to-face visits/meetings with the country statistical offices in order to inform the country directors about the Project and its objectives. A decision had also been made to collect the data in its original format in order to relieve countries from the time-consuming exercise of converting to a specific format.

(c) **Absolute requirements for understanding data collected:** In order to embark on the creation of databases for the region, the datasets must be disaggregated to the lowest level of the individual case. Other information that must accompany datasets so that it can be properly understood and assets include *data dictionaries* relevant to the datasets, *questionnaires* and *a document that maps the variables in the data dictionary to the questions in the questionnaire*.

Data dictionaries were needed to: (i) define each variable; (ii) identify the value labels for each variable; and (iii) describe, where relevant, the location/position of each field in the data file. In some cases, the data dictionary did not match the data in the country datasets. This was especially the case with the Population Census, in which the data dictionaries, which were

similar for at least nine of the 13 countries, were not comprehensively modified to account for slight differences across datasets. As a result, data fields were incorrectly described resulting in the misnaming of variables, and incorrect data being associated with variables. The secretariat also noted that questionnaires allowed for a deeper understanding of context in order that variables could be matched to each other across datasets for the purpose of regional comparison.

#### Datasets accessed by the project

In concluding the presentation, the secretariat outlined to the meeting the datasets that were collected by the project, indicating the countries from which they were obtained; the years for which the data were available and the format in which they were stored and the remaining outputs expected to be completed by the end of the year. These datasets are as follows:

**Table 1: Survey of Living Conditions**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Year(s)</b>	<b>Software</b>
Barbados	1996-97	Summary tables (excel)
Belize	1995	IMPS
Grenada	1999	DBF
Guyana	1994	SPSS
Jamaica	1990-1999	SPSS/SAS
Puerto Rico	1999-2000	Summary tables (excel)
St. Kitts and Nevis	2001	SPSS
Saint Lucia	1995	SPSS
Saint Vincent & the Grenadines	1995	SPSS

**Table 2: Labour Force Survey**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Year(s)</b>	<b>Software</b>
Belize	1993-1999	IMPS
Saint Lucia	1994-2000	SPSS

**Table 3: 1990/1991 Population Census**

Country	Software	Country	Software
Antigua*	IMPS	Jamaica+	IMPS
Bahamas	IMPS	Montserrat*	IMPS
Barbados	IMPS	Puerto Rico	Summary tables (excel)
Belize	IMPS	St. Kitts and Nevis*	IMPS
British Virgin Islands*	IMPS	Saint Lucia*	IMPS
Dominica*	IMPS	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*	IMPS
Grenada*	IMPS	Trinidad and Tobago	IMPS
Guyana*	IMPS		

\*Countries marked with an asterisk have similar data dictionaries

+All Population Census datasets with the exception of Jamaica's were obtained from CARICOM.

The meeting was also informed that the project had negotiated with the Bahamas, Barbados and Belize to receive their 2000/2001 Population Census data before the end of the year.

#### Technical/IT process

The secretariat presented the technical aspects of the creation the statistical databases project to the participants outlining the process of 'data conversion', 'establishing database relationships', 'querying the database', and 'storage utilisation'.

#### *The Data Conversion Process*

Three databases (a) the Population Census; (b) the Labour Force Survey (LFS); and (c) the Survey of Living Conditions (SLC), were created using the SQL Server 2000 (SQL) to house the tables from the respective datasets. Data were supplied in either IMPS, SPSS or DBF format and the process of converting these datasets to be used by SQL Server 2000 were as follows:

**DBF format:** Tables in this format were imported directly into the relevant SQL database using the Data Transformation Services (DTS) package (available in SQL).

**SPSS format:** The SPSS data files –“\*.sav” -were imported into SQL using the SPSS ODBC drivers. These data were sometimes accompanied by the related script file - “\*.sps” – file, which named the variables and provided value labels for these variables. Wherever this was available, relevant lookup tables were created using Microsoft Word and Excel (via the standard cut and paste technique), and exported to SQL.

**IMPS format:** From the data dictionary, a list of variables and corresponding lengths was used to define variables and ultimately create a dataset in DBF format. The resultant “\*.dbf” file was then exported to SQL. The data dictionary was also used to create reference/lookup tables (using Microsoft Excel and Word and Access).

The secretariat explained that it was important to note that reference/lookup information in IMPS/SPSS data dictionary was usually lost during the conversion exercise. Also, typically, datasets in DBF formats did not come with reference/lookup tables. As such, if there were no reference/lookup tables accompanying these datasets, these would have to be recreated. Reference/lookup information needed to be included in the SQL Server 2000 database, and in this regard, the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean was in the process of acquiring this information for datasets that had not been properly documented.

### *Establishing database relationships*

The next step in the process was to establish relationships (in the SQL database) between tables by indicating to the database how tables were “connected” to each other. Several issues were identified when attempting to establish database relationships. These included:

#### *The problem of primary keys*

A primary key is basically defined as an attribute (variable) or a combination of attributes that uniquely identifies each record. Two major issues identified with the datasets are:

(a) Incorrect **selection** of the primary key in which the primary key officially defined and identified was not what it actually turned out to be. The primary key identified in one case was ‘Parish + ED + Household Number’. When this did not work and an investigation was conducted, it was discovered that the actual primary key was ‘Parish + **Village** + Ed + Household Number’; and

(b) Incorrect **construction** of a primary key. In this case the correct primary key was identified, but in some datasets, where they were constructed, this was incorrectly done.

#### *The problem of duplicate records*

Several duplicate sets were discovered. This is defined as any occurrence where more than one record has the same primary key. For example, a Person dataset with primary key Household # + Person # having two or more records with Household #1271 and Person #01 constitutes a duplicate set.

#### *The problem of referential integrity*

This is defined as a condition in which an attribute (or combination of attributes) in one table must match the primary key in another table. For example, in the SLC surveys each record in the Persons table (Household #, Person #) must correspond to exactly one record in the

Household table. This requirement was violated in several datasets --- e.g., Migration, Food and Annual records, with no corresponding Household record.

Attempts to rectify the above issues would have resulted in modifications to several of the datasets. This would not be acceptable since results derived from these datasets would have differed from published results. As such, relationships on the SQL database were created without enforcing database integrity checks. The secretariat presented to the participants a matrix identifying the datasets that had problems of duplicate records and those having problems of referential integrity.

**Table 4: Duplicate and referential integrity issues associated with the 1990/1991 Population Census**

	Household		Persons	
Antigua	18,476	D	59,345	D, R
Bahamas	64,029	D	234,292	D
Barbados	82,204	D	247,288	D
Belize	37,944	D	185,970	R
British Virgin Islands	5,332	D	16,115	D, R
Dominica	19,371	D	69,463	D
Grenada	21,972		85,123	D
Guyana	150,575	D	701,704	D
Jamaica	588,711	D	2,337,711	D
Montserrat	3,855	D	10,639	D
St. Kitts and Nevis	12,056	D	40,618	D
Saint Lucia	33,079		133,308	D
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	27,002	D	12,116	D
Trinidad and Tobago	274,846		1,125,128	D

D = Duplicates

R = Referential Integrity

### *Querying the database*

The SQL database can be queried by any ODBC compliant product. Examples of popular applications that can interface with the database are SPSS, SQL (internal to SQL Server 2000), Excel and MS Access.

In order to effectively query the database, the secretariat explained that the database/application administrator created popular views for the users who may then access and manipulate it via the ODBC compliant product. By definition, a view is a mechanism for gathering elements from the database and assembling them into a virtual table. Views simplify database querying since they eliminate the need to understand the underlying structure of the database. For example, a view can be created called "Household Person View" which contains

records from the Household table in addition to all related Person records. ODBC currently allows access to a maximum of 255 variables. One of the limitations of SPSS, In this regard, is that it restricts the lengths of variables to eight characters.

### *Storage Utilisation*

The secretariat reported that the server used for the project was a Dell Poweredge 2500 server with 512MB of memory, two (2) 18GB hard drives, 20/40GB Internal Tape Drive, Windows 2000 Server, Two Pentium III Processor (1GHz), 17" Monitor, 256K cache. In terms of storage space utilization the project had used a total of 6.25GB of space for the storage of the three datasets that were constructed so far. The initial datasets together with the intermediate work files generated during the conversion process used another 8.0GB, and the operating system, backup software and SQL Server 2000 utilised some 2.5GB of space, resulting in a grand total of 16.75GB or 47% of total hard drive.

The secretariat concluded its presentation by pointing to the benefits of the database as it was constructed. Apart from having one location for easy access to all data housed and linked to this project, the use of the SQL Server 2000 database meant that an administrator was readily available. This was especially important in the context of limited human resource capacity and meant that there was no fear of being unable to find a database administrator because the technology required special technical expertise. The use of the SQL Server 2000 database also meant that it could be queried by any ODBC compliant product, thus increasing its accessibility. Finally, the database was able to store over one million terabytes of data – a very large amount of space that would most likely comfortably store all the data the project was likely to obtain in the near future.

### *Data quality issues*

The secretariat reported on some of the issues of data quality that were identified during the use of the data sets for social statistical analysis.

Some of the datasets that were received had missed the opportunity for some basic cleaning. As a result there were datasets that contained missing value labels, misnamed value labels and blank/missing records. It was suggested that simple frequency tables could correct these problems in order to obtain cleaner datasets. Situations where both values and variables were difficult to identify due to unfriendly labelling practices were also identified.

Some of the datasets also contained high levels of non-responses. In cases where it seemed that statistical methods were used to deal with this, this resulted in other data quality issues. One such issue had to do with the high number of duplication of cases found in the datasets. Some of the duplications were considered to be 'true duplicates', because they contained the same information for every variable/attribute.

Other duplicates seemed to represent an attempt at substitution or imputation of cases in the datasets. This conclusion was arrived at because these cases only duplicated the unique identifier - more often than not, the household and/or person numbers. The other attributes of

these cases were not duplicated. If this was indeed the case, there was a need to create unique identifiers in the form of different household and person numbers for each of the cases that were imputed or where substitution took place. If this is not done, a problem is created when one attempts to merge datasets for the purpose of analysis.

In cases where datasets have been divided into modules, as with the Survey of Living Conditions, in which anthropometric and migration modules have been conducted, the need for unique identifiers that provided true referential integrity become really important. If this is not done, then it becomes difficult or impossible to merge the dataset and the merging of these modules to the household and/or person datasets have the potential to yield very rich analysis.

In identifying the kinds of practices that could lead to better quality datasets in the region, the secretariat spoke to the need for a regional movement that would focus on the harmonization of questionnaires, as well as the standardization of variables and the harmonization of values associated with those variables.

Some advantages and disadvantages associated with the use of software for data analysis were also discussed. Some software seemed to be more amenable to the collection and manipulation of certain datasets. From the perspective of size, SPSS, for example, is more amenable to smaller datasets, while IMPS is best suited for large quantities of data. On the other hand, from the perspective of the structure, data such as the SLC, which is often divided into a number of components and is hierarchical in nature is best handled by IMPS. Single component questionnaires, such as the population census would be better handled by SPSS were it not for its large size.

## **Discussion**

In responding to the presentations, participants expressed their interest in the progress of the project and voiced similar concerns regarding the issue of data quality in their own use of some of the datasets in the region. The representative of the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) explained that issues of standardization and harmonization were also evident in the health datasets that the organization received from the region and called for an interagency approach to address some of the common problems being encountered.

Dr. Elsie LeFranc of the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute for Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) suggested that a regional approach to overcome the problem of human capacity at the national level was necessary to assure a high level of data quality. In this regard, such a regional approach would fulfil two functions. It could strengthen the capacity wherever national resources for ensuring good quality data did not exist. Secondly such an approach could strengthen existing national capacity through its support and monitoring of statistical personnel within countries of the region.

Dr. Dennis Brown of the University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine, Trinidad, supported this suggestion and spoke of the need to deepen the process of producing and utilizing data for evidence-based social policy by institutionalizing the process. In this regard specific and

well-defined roles for regional institutions in the areas of teaching, analysis of data and production of data were suggested.

Ms. Linda Hewitt spoke of the need for UWI to develop a programme of training in statistics aimed at retraining or retooling professionals as well as persons who worked in statistical offices.

The representative of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) suggested that in cases where quality deficits were found in country datasets, emphasis should be placed on providing feedback to the countries in question. The need to coordinate activities among statistical offices involved in the collection of data, such as health and employment at the national level, was also pointed out.

#### **Agenda item 4: Review of training agenda**

Training of senior technocrats in the field of social development and senior statisticians with responsibility for socio-demographic data was projected as one of the most significant outputs which the project would address in the upcoming period. The training would be provided in evidence-based social policy formulation. The objectives of the training were described as being twofold:

- (a) To enhance the skills of senior technocrats in evidence based social policy formulation and;
- (b) To share with them the workings of the Caribbean social statistical databases.

It was suggested, by the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat, that the training would be made available to all governments in the subregion and presented in two segments to facilitate countries clustered in the south and north Caribbean. One in Trinidad and Tobago which would bring representatives of 12 countries in the southern Caribbean together and the other in possibly Jamaica, for those countries in the north.

Experts, the meeting was told, would be drawn from UWI, ECLAC/CDCC and other United Nations agencies. The provisional training agenda, which is attached in Annex 1, was presented to the meeting for its consideration.

Participants agreed that the training in evidence-based social policy formulation was critical to the subregion and saw this programme as a significant contribution to that process. Satisfaction was expressed with the provisional agenda presented.

**Agenda item 5:  
Update on the social vulnerability index (SVI)**

The meeting was informed of the intention to host an expert group meeting in the last quarter of the year to address the methodology for the construction of a Social Vulnerability Index. The purpose of such a meeting would be to review the work on the methodology and to advise on the way forward. It was indicated that a production of a popular version of the methodology was also planned. The details of all tasks to be undertaken were presented to the meeting in a matrix attached as Table 6.

With this assurance being given, Dr. Godfrey St. Bernard, Senior Research Fellow at SALISES, was invited to present brief comments to the meeting on his research work on the development of a methodology for the construction of a social vulnerability index for Caribbean SIDS

The meeting was informed that just as the two environmental and economical vulnerability indices (EVIs) were numerical indicators, so too the SVI was expected to be a numerical indicator which would reflect the status of a country's social vulnerability.

Although such an index should theoretically be able to be derived at the individual, household, community and national levels for it to be useful to the governments in the subregion, Dr. St. Bernard recommended that such an index would have to be calculated at the national level. This would also allow for comparability with the other vulnerability indices being constructed at the international level, namely, the Economic Vulnerability Index being undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Environmental Vulnerability Index by South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC).

Dr. St. Bernard suggested that it was possible to construct two sub-indices, one of social risk and the other of social resilience. Defining and selecting the indicators, which best described the risks and resilience was a bit of a challenge. Ensuring that the relevant data existed to measure social risk and resilience was the next critical challenge to the process. He suggested the social vulnerability index should follow the best practices of other indices, the main being simplicity. The meeting was reminded that the smaller the number of indicators to be used in the construction the better it would be to operationalise the index.

Agreeing with the view expressed in the literature that in developing a composite index for countries one would have to proceed with great care, Dr. St. Bernard expressed satisfaction that the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean had taken up the challenge to work on the methodology for the SVI. He also expressed confidence that the experts in the Caribbean were up to the task.

Participants then discussed key indicators and agreed that in terms of both process and outcome, the SVI should go beyond the Human Development Index (HDI) in explaining to governments their countries' socio-economic conditions.

**Agenda item 6:  
The way forward for the next project cycle**

In addressing the way forward for the project, the meeting was briefed on the major outstanding outputs due in the last quarter of the project. Among those, the meeting was informed, was a second compendium of Selected Social Statistics intended to examine the change in social conditions of persons in possibly four countries in the Caribbean, utilising current and past census data to provide a comparative analysis.

Another step was the development of the website for the project, which would take place during this period as well. This would be accompanied by the construction of the meta data dictionary to support the databases. Both tasks were expected to be completed by December. The meeting was assured that the continued collection of data would take place.

Arising out of the discussion were the following recommendations to improve the status of social statistics in the subregion:

- (a) Continued collection and analysis of social statistics;
- (b) Standardization of (a) the definition of survey/census variables; and (b) the unit of measurement of ratios to be used (to be facilitated by inter-governmental agencies);
- (c) Consideration of the regionalisation of supervision and support for data cleaning and data analysis;
- (d) Consideration of the institutionalization at the regional level of training and capacity building of social statisticians (possible role for UWI);
- (e) Coordinated and consistent agency support for national statistical offices;
- (f) Training programmes should pay particular attention to supervision of the data collection components at a subregional level;
- (g) Consideration of web-based training modules to support/supplement periodic training programmes;
- (h) Expansion of training initiatives to enhance evidence-based social policy at the national level with a wider inter-disciplinary focus. Inter-agency collaboration to be pursued; and
- (i) High level meeting of social policy makers to increase governmental awareness and strengthen commitment for evidence-based social policy.

## **Closing**

The secretariat thanked participants for having taken the time to attend the meeting and assured them of the high value placed on their input to the progress of the project.

The meeting ended with the usual exchange of courtesies and participants were assured that they would be kept abreast of the outcome of the activities in the final quarter of the project.

**Table 6:  
WORK SCHEDULE FOR PROJECT: NET/00/035**

Activities	September				October				November				December			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting		←→		✓												
Training																
1 <sup>st</sup> – Trinidad and Tobago		←→			←→		✓									
2 <sup>nd</sup> - Jamaica	←→				←→			✓								
Missions																
Suriname					✓											
Antigua/Grenada/St Vincent & the Grenadines									✓	✓						
Reports																
2 <sup>nd</sup> Compendium	←→											*	*	*	*	*
Consultant					←→											
Meeting(s)																
Expert Group Meeting (SVI)					←→				←→				✓			
Background document					←→				←→		✓					
Website	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Promotion																
Manual													←→	←→	←→	←→

- \* In-house editing, final printing and dissemination
- \*\* Ongoing

## Annex I

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