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DESCRIPTION OF INFORMATION ACTIVITIES OF THE  
CARIBBEAN DOCUMENTATION CENTRE  
UN. ECLAC. SUBREGIONAL HEADQUARTERS FOR THE CARIBBEAN

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CARIBBEAN DOCUMENTATION CENTRE  
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## PRESENTATION BY ECLAC'S CARIBBEAN DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

### 1. The Institution

#### 1a. Objectives of the Institution

The Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was established in 1966 to assist in the economic and social development of the Caribbean subregion and to promote and strengthen technical and economic cooperation among the countries of the region, as well as between them and countries outside the region.

At the sixteenth session of ECLA, held in Trinidad & Tobago in 1975, it was agreed to establish the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC)\*, with the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean as the Secretariat. The CDCC has the status of a permanent subsidiary body of ECLAC, to which it reports. Its programme of work, which comprises the majority of the activities of the Caribbean Subregional Headquarters, forms part of the United Nations-approved regular ECLAC work programme. The ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean works in close collaboration with other Caribbean regional and subregional organizations, Latin American cooperation and integration institutions, and the United Nations System of organizations.

#### 1b. Activities of the Institution

Demography is a priority issue in the programme of work of the CDCC. Activities accomplished include a census analysis for eleven countries and a fertility research study. Among the activities currently being undertaken is a UNFPA-funded project aimed at providing in-service training in upgrading the quality of vital registration data. A demographic survey to obtain alternative estimates of fertility, mortality and migration has also been conducted for Guyana, in collaboration with that government.

The Unit's training activities are designed to develop capabilities to understand the inter-relationships between population and development, project population growth, evaluate its interactions with various social and economic sectors and communicate results to planners and policy-makers. The Unit has

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\*The CDCC comprises 16 Caribbean members of ECLAC: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Christopher and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago, and the four associate members: the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles and the United

collaborated with the CARICOM Secretariat in conducting short-term training seminars on population policy formulation.

Other activities include preparation of population projections for a UNFPA-funded CARICOM/ISER project on analysis of census data; participation in CELADE/REDATAM project providing microcomputer-based census data for small area planning and collaboration with the Caribbean Documentation Centre in establishing links with population information systems and the dissemination of information.

The Demography Unit has focused its research on the key links between population factors and attainment of economic and social development goals and on methods for strengthening the capacity of Governments for the formulation, implementation and evaluation of population policies. Studies undertaken have been concerned with the relationships between fertility, mortality, migration and socio-economic factors. Emphasis is also placed on methods of reporting and disseminating research findings to government planners and policy makers.

In collaboration with the Caribbean Documentation Centre, the Unit provides assistance to Governments in seeking the availability and utilization of population information to develop a more systematic use of research knowledge for development plans and programmes.

## 2. POPULATION INFORMATION USED OR GENERATED

### 2a. Information Used

The Demography Unit needs strong information support in order to conduct its research and training programmes and to implement its programme on the integration of population into development planning. For example, general studies on methodologies for policy formulation and implementation, or studies which indicate how various social and economic programmes affect population and how population in turn impact on development; studies on the interpretation of population estimates. Up-to-date information is also needed on new techniques for integrating population into development plans, different methodologies for projections, for estimating population change components. Vital statistics, migration and census data are essential, especially since the Unit has responsibility for population projections. Recently, these types of data have been collected and stored as country files on a microcomputer. It is expected that the files will be developed into a data bank and made accessible to external users.

## 2b. Information Generated

Technical publications generated by the Unit relate to:

- studies on determinants and consequences of components of population change (fertility, mortality, internal and international migration) with emphasis on the implications for social and economic planning;
- country monographs analysing data from the 1980 census programme;
- technical bulletins on population and household projections by age/sex, for urban/rural areas for the less developed countries of the CDCC.

A list of the publications of the Unit is appended.

The Institute of Social and Economic Studies of the University of the West Indies also generate information on employment, fertility planning and migration, whereas the Caribbean Family Planning Association undertakes studies on contraceptive use and adolescent fertility.

## 3. UNITS OF BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, DATA PROCESSING OR DATA BANKS OF THE INSTITUTION.

The Caribbean Documentation Centre was established within ECLAC in 1977 to provide library and documentation services to the ECLAC staff, as well as information support for the development and cooperation activities of the CDCC. The Centre also serves as the coordinator of the Caribbean Information System (CIS) - an umbrella under which sectoral networks could develop and service effectively those areas which have been identified as priority concerns by the CDCC. The first such network to be created was the Caribbean Information System for Economic and Social Planning (CARISPLAN).

As the regional coordinating centre for CARISPLAN, the CDC prepares bibliographic records of documents about the Caribbean in general and collects similar records of national literature from the National Planning Agencies (as focal points for the Network) and participating centres. These national centres identify and collect relevant literature about their country, prepare bibliographic and analytic summaries according to agreed standards, and assign indexing descriptors or keywords. The records are entered into the Centre's HP 3000/37 minicomputer to form the CARISPLAN data base. MINISIS data base management system is used to process the data.

The data base, which has been on-line to the public since last September, is multilingual and currently contains over 14,000 records of reports, feasibility studies, development plans, projects, and methodological studies which may not have been disseminated widely originally nor produced commercially. Caribbean government and inter-governmental organizations are the major producers of the documents in the CDC data base.

The Centre also maintains a data base of patents granted by Caribbean countries, a data base of current users who are online to the system and an electronic mail facility which enables remote users to exchange messages among themselves or with the System Manager.

A quarterly abstracting journal, CARISPLAN Abstracts, and a monthly Current Awareness Bulletin are produced and disseminated throughout the subregion to planners, researchers and libraries. Microfiche and photocopy facilities are also available.

### 3b. Acquisition of Material

Through the CARISPLAN network the Centre acquires relevant publications from key Caribbean institutions which generate information in the socio-economic field.

A substantially reduced budget enables the purchase of highly relevant monographs and the maintenance of annual subscriptions to a limited number of journal titles. Exchange agreements have been established with a number of development research centres, libraries and international agencies.

### 3c. Changes in the past ten years

The main changes in the Centre during the past ten years relate to network activities and computerization. The Centre has grown from a small one person library to a documentation Centre with network coordinating responsibilities and functions undertaken by a staff of ten. The CARISPLAN network enabled the Centre to build a large resource base with input from a variety of sources which would have been difficult otherwise. Standardized procedures and authority manuals enhance ease of access.

Considerable financial assistance and computer equipment donated by the International Development Research Centre contributed to an improvement in technical operations and substantial upgrading of the services provided. All printed outputs are computer-produced. Authority files have been



created for distribution to participating libraries. Searching of external data bases through DIALOG, DATASOLVE and the IDRC Library enhanced the service provided to users.

Financial Assistance from UNESCO enabled the Centre to train a number of librarians in the use of micro CDS/ISIS. It is expected that this will enable the national focal points to provide the CARISPLAN bibliographic input on diskette and to maintain the national data base of socio-economic literature. The CDC has transferred from MINISIS to CDS/ISIS the national input provided by three participating member states for update and maintenance by the national focal point.

Experience at the CDC indicates that the human effort to successfully implement computerized bibliographic systems was underestimated, especially in terms of printed outputs.

To effectively implement the system, it was necessary to cut across traditional function boundaries and situations were created which placed a strain on normal lines of communication. Relationships between activities and job functions were also affected and, on reflection, there should have been a reappraisal of the Centre and a redefinition of its methods before and during the changeover.

### **3d. Failure to Meet the Information Needs of the Population Unit**

When the Population Unit was created in 1985, no provision was made to increase the budget of the Documentation Centre to enable it to provide adequate information support to the Unit. Subsequently, the Centre's acquisitions budget was reduced and no replacement for its indexer possible. The Centre's collection of documents in the field of population is very poor and would need to be considerably strengthened to support the Unit and its future activities.

4.

### **THE FUTURE**

The Population Unit has assisted ten Caribbean countries in the formulation of national population policies which are to be implemented. It is also expected that at the national level population units will be established in the Ministries of Planning. At present, the libraries of these Ministries are the national focal points for the CARISPLAN Network. There is an urgent need to strengthen the population segment of the CARISPLAN network in order to support the implementation of national population policies.

### Access to Bibliographic and Full-text Data

It would be useful if DOCPAL's data base could be easily accessible to the region; in view of high telecommunication costs, transfer of the data base to CD-ROM will enable those institutions with microcomputers to access the data base in-house. Extrabudgetary funding should be sought for this activity, including the software.

Access to full-text of relevant documents and journal articles should be strengthened. CELADE should explore the possibilities of extending this service, bearing in mind the new forms of laser technology, e.g. use of the scanner to transfer the full text of journal articles into the microcomputer and subsequent distribution to participating libraries on diskettes. This could be linked to an SDI service.

In return, participating libraries should send to CELADE relevant documents generated by institutions in their country.

### Standards

CELADE should continue to promote the use of established standards for population information systems in the region, especially in terms of computerization and the use of micro CDSISIS.

### Dissemination

In order to communicate activities undertaken in the network, a news bulletin should be published periodically, with inputs from various centres.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS PRODUCED BY THE ECLAC/CELADE DEMOGRAPHY UNIT  
PORT OF SPAIN, TRINIDAD

1. Report on the retrospective Demographic Survey of Guyana (Guyredem). June, 1987. (WP/GUYREDEM/L.87/1)
2. Preliminary results and tables from Guyredem. June, 1987. (WP/GUYREDEM/L.87/2)
3. Operational and implementation aspects of population policies. April, 1987. (LC/CAR/R.227)
4. Preliminary report on population projections (1980-2015) for nine Caribbean countries. November, 1986. (LC/CAR/R.213)
5. Population and development considerations in the context of family planning. September, 1986. (LC/CAR/R.194)
6. Population, human resources and development planning: need for Multisectoral Institutional Network for Population Policy Implementation. August, 1986. (LC/CAR/R.193)
7. Guyredem retrospective demographic survey of Guyana - 1986. Enumerator's Manual.
8. Report on the Second CARICOM/ECLAC/CELADE Regional Training Seminar on Population Policy Formulation, Barbados, 7-18 July, 1986. (LC/CAR/L.187)
9. Training in Demographic Analysis for the Caribbean: a report by Jack Harewood. December 1985
10. Report on CARICOM/ECLAC/CELADE training course in population policy formulation, St. Christopher/Nevis, 27 Oct-5Nov., 1985. (LC/CAR/L.186)
11. Population policy formulation: guidelines for the Caribbean. October, 1985. (CDCC/PP/G.85/1)
12. Mortality, fertility and family planning: Dominica and St. Lucia, by G. Edward Ebanks. October 1985. (LC/DEM/G.35)
13. Implications for population activities in the Caribbean. United Nations International Conference on Population, Mexico City, 1985. April 1985. (LC/CAR/G.147)

