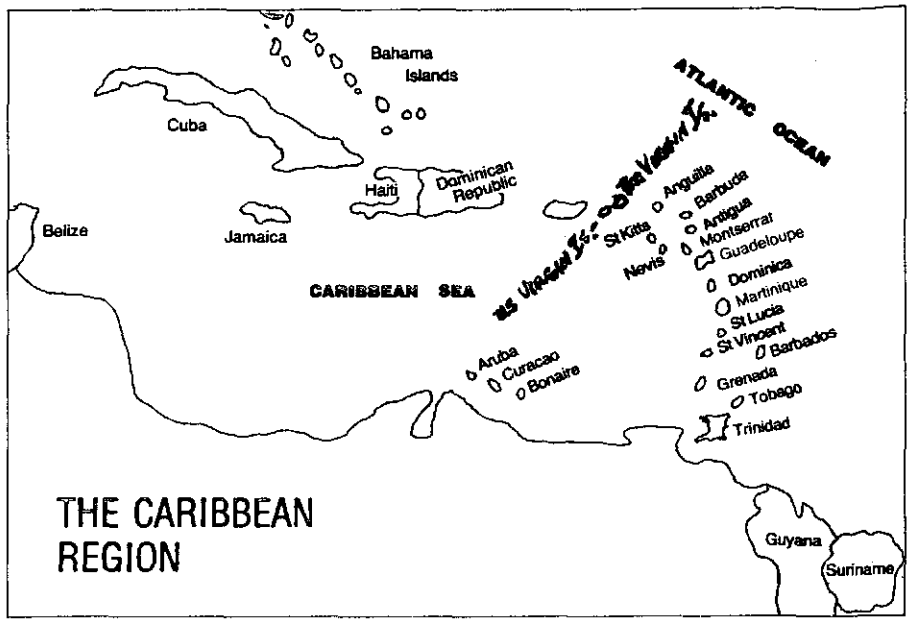
CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION COMMITTEE



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Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean

CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION COMMITTEE

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REPORT OF MEETING OF REGIONAL STATISTICIANS TO CONSIDER THE PROBLEM OF RESPONDENT BURDEN FOR STATISTICS OF THE OECS COUNTRIES

(Antigua, 4 November 1985)

UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean

ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

A one-day meeting of Statisticians attached to subregional and regional Offices in the Caribbean was convened by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and held in Antigua on 4 November 1985.

Attendance

Representatives of the following agencies attended the meeting: Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB), Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Secretariat (Economic Affairs Secretariat), Inter-Agency Resident Mission (IARM), the Caribbean Tourism Research and Development Centre (CTRC), the CARICOM Secretariat and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) could not attend the meeting. The list of participants appears in Annex II.

Opening of the meeting

Mr. L. Busby of ECLAC opened the meeting by welcoming the representatives and thanking them for their attendance. He recalled the mandate given to ECLAC at the sixth meeting of OECS Statisticians to convene a meeting of Regional Statisticians to examine the problem of respondent burden and to consider ways and means of minimizing that burden on the OECS countries. Mr. Busby noted the many requests for information that were made to the countries and observed that in some cases the data sets were similar. He observed that ad hoc requests for information were made from time to time, and would continue to be made. He thought, however, that the meeting could examine usefully the regular requests for data and seek to alleviate the respondent burden wherever possible.

Organization of work

The meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Introductory remarks.
2. Discussion of agency requirements.
3. Discussion of possibilities of sharing data and adjusting schedules.
4. Discussion of facilitation of responses to data requests.

In reporting on the data requirements of the ECCB, the representative of that organization saw the need for data on a quarterly as well as on an annual basis so as to inform Bank Intelligence. The ECCB attempted to publish reports 60 days after the end of each quarter. Data required included series on: The Balance of Payments, Trade by SITC Sections, Trade by end-use, National Accounts, Imports and Exports of selected commodities, Tourist arrivals, Tourist expenditure, Agricultural production, Industrial production, Central Government financial operations and prices. Annex I presents the data demand by periodicity and requesting agency.

The representative of CTRC noted that tourism statistics were being produced too slowly. The fierce competition in the tourism industry made it highly desirable for the countries to produce timely and high-quality statistics. The CTRC had embarked on a project to upgrade tourism statistics in the countries and to enrich the CTRC's data base. It therefore, had a tourism statistics data base second to none in the Caribbean. The basic document used for generating tourism statistics is the E/D card with additional data being collected through surveys. The publications of the CTRC demonstrate the fact that at base the Caribbean can be considered as one large destination, and that tourism planners in any country can use the publication to assess their performance vis a vis that of other countries in the subregion. Statistics collected by CTRC include the following:

- Monthly distribution of stop-over visitors by sex, country of residence, state of residence (U.S. tourists), place of stay, length of stay, purpose of visit.

- Monthly data on Cruise-ship passengers and other excursionists.

- Room and bed occupancy rates.

- Room capacity by type of accommodation.

- Visitor expenditure.

- Other relevant information.

The representative of the CARICOM Secretariat informed the meeting of the Statistical Library kept and maintained at the Secretariat. In addition to several ad hoc requests that the Statistics Unit provided, several regular data requests were made of the countries. The Nassau Heads of Government Conference commissioned the CARICOM Secretariat to monitor intraregional trade, resulting in that important data being requested on a regional basis. The CARICOM Secretariat approached the countries in November to collect intraregional trade data up to the end of September in time for the writing of the paper to inform the Council of Ministers. This exercise was repeated in late May when another data-gathering exercise updated that of November.

Apart from intraregional trade statistics, the following were requested by the CARICOM Secretariat.

- External trade statistics for inclusion in Digest of Trade Statistics.

- National Accounts.

- A general CARICOM Statistics Digest.

- Education statistics.

Apart from the strict deadlines regarding intraregional trade statistics, the CARICOM Secretariat is flexible on the deadlines for the receipt of data.

The ECLAC representative, in presenting the data needs of that Office, drew the distinction between ad hoc requests and regular and predictable requests. The ad hoc requests will continue and cannot be planned for. He therefore confined the articulation of his data request to regular and predictable exercises. He cited the annual economic survey of Caribbean countries as constituting a major element of data demand, and noted that several other agencies requested much the same sets as asked for by ECLAC. He noted that different dates of demand yielded different data for what are essentially measurements of the same phenomena. If data requests to countries could be deferred somewhat, this would reduce the pressure on data provision. The ECLAC submission examined the problem from both the supply and demand sides and concluded that the real problem lay between those sides. One possibility of coming to terms with the problem was to provide the statistical offices with the resources to maintain a computerized data base that would afford data upon demand. The suggestion seemed consonant with that contained in a draft project document prepared by the OECS Secretariat.

In supporting the idea of the creation of data bases, the ECLAC representative encouraged the sharing of information, by referring some requests to specialist agencies engaged in the frequent collection and preparation of certain types of statistical data.

The ECLAC request for data was by and large annual at present, but periodicity of request would vary to quarterly and monthly as in-house resources permitted. The ECLAC request embraced the following:

- National Accounts - GDP by sector, current and constant prices.
- Agricultural Production.
- Mining Production.
- Manufacturing Production.
- Indicators of Construction.
- Indicators of employment and unemployment.
- Volume and Value of External Trade.
- Balance of Payments.
- Indicators of External Debt.
- Prices.
- Wages and Salaries.
- Financial statistics.
- Central Government operations.
- Tourism statistics.

The IARM representative outlined the purpose of his Organization as assistance to the OECS countries in the pursuit of economic development. The IARM helped the OECS countries in their data collection efforts, but did not itself collect either primary or secondary data. The IARM representative saw the problem as being one of an inability of the Statistical Offices to retain staff and thought that the provision of microcomputers would not necessarily solve the problem of the rapid turnover of staff with the resultant inability to service requests for information.

The representative of the OECS/Economic Affairs Secretariat stated that that Office was mainly a user of data, but in the area of National Accounts assisted the countries in the construction of their accounts.

The OECS/EAS utilized published data in making its compendia , requesting ad hoc data as the situation warranteed it. The OECS Economic Affairs Secretariat would wish to receive with varying degrees of periodicity, the following:

- Trade data (including Direction of Trade).

- Socio Economic data.

- National Accounts data.

such as appear in its Annual Digest.

The discussion that followed the presentations identified the need to create a capability to respond to requests for data. The meeting at the same time agreed that every attempt should be made to co-ordinate data requests. In this context the subject of data banks was discussed, and the desirability of sharing information was underlined. The participants agreed that in view of the size of the data requests and the shortage of human resources in the countries, computer hardware and one post of Information Officer should be provided in each country to manage a computerized data base that would facilitate the tasks of updating series and providing hardcopy. The Information Officer need not be a professional, but should be supervised by a professional officer. It was thought that the man-machine factor mix would confront, probably adequately, the problem of manpower shortage in the face of multiple requests for data.

The meeting was informed of a draft project document that had been prepared by the OECS Secretariat. That document addressed the questions of restructuring of the national statistical offices and the provision of resources to process overseas trade data as well as other elements of the data output of the national statistical offices. The meeting agreed that in view of the proposals as contained in the draft project document, the document should be strengthened to secure the computer hardware and the restructuring of national statistical offices.

The meeting advised that in order to ensure maximum portability of software, the countries should acquire exactly the same type of microcomputer hardware. It was the view of the meeting that with the provision of microcomputers and information offices, the statistical offices could pass easily to the stage of making some published analysis of the data produced, thereby increasing their usefulness and raising their image.

Annex I

A SUMMARY OF REGULAR AND FORESEEN DATA REQUESTS BY PERIODICITY - (A=Annual, Q=Quarterly, M=Monthly)

Data requested	Periodicity	Agencies Requesting data
External trade by SITC Section	A,Q,M	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, ECCB
Intra-CARICOM trade by SITC Section	A,Q,M	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, ECCB
External trade by Broad Economic Category	A,Q,M	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, ECCB
Export of main commodities	A,Q,M	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, ECCB
Volume and Value indexes of trade	A,Q,M	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, ECCB
Balance of Payments	A	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, ECCB
GDP by sector of origin - Current prices	A	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, ECCB
GDP by sector of origin - Constant prices	A	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, ECCB
Indicators of Agricultural production	A,Q	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, ECCB
Indicators of Mining production	A	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, ECCB
Indicators of Manufacturing production	A,Q	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, ECCB
Indicators of Construction	A	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, ECCB
Retail Price Index	A,M	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, ECCB
Indicators of Employment/ Unemployment	A	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, ECCB, CTRC
Indicators of Wages and Salaries	A	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, ECCB, CTRC
Monetary Balance	A,M	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, ECCB
Central Government Revenue and Expenditure	A,M	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, ECCB
Indicators of External Debt	A	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, ECCB
Analysis of Loans Outstanding by Sector	A,M	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, ECCB
Analysis of stayover tourist arrivals by:		
Country of Residence	A,M	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, CTRC
State of Residence	A,M	CTRC, ECLAC
Length of Stay	A,M	ECLAC, CARICOM, OECS, CTRC
Place of stay	A,M	CTRC
Purpose of visit	A,M	CTRC
Number of Cruiseship passenger arrivals	A,M	CTRC, ECLAC
Number of other excursionist arrivals	A,M	CTRC, ECLAC
Room occupancy rates	A,M	CTRC, ECLAC
Bed occupancy rates	A,M	CTRC
Room capacity by type of Accommodation	A,M	CTRC
Visitor expenditure	A,M	CTRC, ECLAC, CARICOM, ECCB

Annex II

LIST OF PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)
Ms. Yolanda Goodwin, Senior Statistician, OECS/EAS.

Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB)
Ms. Jackie Ferracho, Economist, Research Department.

Caribbean Tourism Research and Development Centre (CTRC)
Mr. H. Arley Sobers, Tourism Statistics Specialist.

Inter-Agency Resident Mission (IARM)
Mr. Ruben Cobas, OAS Econmic Statistician, IARM.

Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM)
Mrs. Carol Paul, Chief, Statistics Section.

ECLAC SYSTEM

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
Mr. Lancelot Busby, Economic Affairs Officer (Statistics).
