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**REPORT OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON THE DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT
SUPPORTED PROJECT ON MDG/IADG MONITORING IN THE CARIBBEAN**

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Table of contents

Introduction.....	1
Agenda item 1: Opening session.....	1
Agenda Item 2: MDG monitoring – the United Nations in the Caribbean	3
(a) ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean.....	3
(b) ILO.....	4
Agenda Item 3: Presentations on achievements and challenges in MDG monitoring	6
(a) UNFPA	6
(b) UNDP.....	7
(c) UNICEF	7
Agenda Item 4: MDG monitoring at a country level.....	8
Results of the ECLAC survey	8
Country briefs – status of MDG reporting	9
(a) Jamaica.....	9
(b) Suriname.....	10
(c) Saint Lucia.....	11
(d) Netherlands Antilles.....	12
(e) Dominica	12
(f) Grenada	13
(g) The Bahamas	14
(h) CARICOM Secretariat	15
(i) Trinidad and Tobago	15
(j) University of Technology, Jamaica.....	17
(k) St. Kitts and Nevis.....	18
(l) St. Vincent and the Grenadines	18
(m) United States Virgin Islands.....	19
(n) Antigua and Barbuda.....	19
Agenda Item 5: Summary and recommendations	20
Agenda Item 6: Closure of the meeting	21
Annex I : AGENDA.....	22
Annex II: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	24

EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT SUPPORTED PROJECT ON MDG/IADG MONITORING IN THE CARIBBEAN

Introduction

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, convened a two-day expert group meeting within the framework of the United Nations Development Account-funded project 'Strengthening the Capacity of National Statistical Offices in the Caribbean Small Island Developing States to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs)', in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on 2-3 February 2009.

Present at this meeting were senior statisticians from National Statistical Offices (NSOs) from the following countries: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, the Netherlands Antilles, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and the United States Virgin Islands. Also in attendance were experts from United Nations agencies including the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and an independent expert from the University of Technology in Jamaica. An official from the Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM) Statistics Sub-Programme participated with a presentation via teleconference. The full list of participants appears at Annex II.

This meeting was the first output of the above cited Development Account project, convened to identify the status of MDGs and IADGs monitoring and reporting in the Caribbean, at the country as well as at the regional level. The meeting also sought to provide a platform for discussions among the stakeholders present to identify areas in need of technical assistance that could be provided through the project.

Agenda item 1: Opening session

Mr. Neil Pierre, Director of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, welcomed participants to the meeting, pointing to the value of the project in addressing gaps at the national and regional levels with respect to monitoring and reporting on the MDGs. He reflected on the significance of the United Nations Millennium Summit convened in September 2000 when world leaders agreed to a set of time-bound and measurable goals and targets for combating poverty, disease, hunger, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. In the Caribbean, progress was to be reported in various areas, such as decreasing poverty levels, eradicating the gender gap in school enrolment, improving access to health care facilities and decreasing rates of infant mortality. However, rising maternal mortality rates, increases in rates of chronic diseases and the under-representation of women in decision-making forums continued to be matters of concern in the region. He then outlined the mechanisms instituted by the United Nations to assist countries to attain these goals: (a) annual

reporting at a national level on progress towards achieving those goals; (b) the commissioning of an independent advisory body, the 'UN Millennium Project' headed by Professor Jeffery Sachs, to develop a concrete action plan for the world to achieve the MDGs; (c) the 'UN Millennium Campaign' aimed at raising awareness at all fronts; and (d) the global monitoring system supported by the United Nations regional commissions and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). In closing, he outlined the challenges faced by the Caribbean with regard to MDG monitoring and pointed to the relevance of this project as well as other initiatives such as the 'Support to Poverty Assessment and Reduction in the Caribbean' (SPARC) project in enhancing data collection, analysis and reporting on MDG and other development indicators.

Overview of MDG/IADG Development Account Project

The representative of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, who serves as project coordinator, provided the meeting with an overview of the major objectives and expected outcomes of the project. She also presented a brief assessment of the status of MDG reporting in the Caribbean indicating that only a few countries so far had produced national MDG reports and that Belize was the only country in the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean to engage in an MDG costing exercise. She elaborated on the scope of the project to address gaps at the national and regional levels with respect to MDG-related data. She also emphasized that the project would provide a platform to identify common needs and identify practicable solutions to be developed within the framework of this project. Examples of such areas were the establishment of common data collection protocols, strengthening national capacity to analyze data and the enhancement in monitoring, reporting and sharing mechanisms of all MDG-related data and meta-data.

While the implementation of the project had been delayed, she reported on a number of activities undertaken during the last quarter of 2008. These were an assessment of the status of MDG monitoring and reporting in the Caribbean at the national and regional levels (desk research and a mailed survey). The results of this assessment were reported in more detail in a later segment of the meeting and a report on the findings was shared with all participants. Further activities already scheduled for 2009 were the establishment of a project Steering Committee that was scheduled to have its first meeting immediately after this expert group meeting. An expert group meeting on reproductive health and health statistics would be convened in the second quarter of 2009 and an in-depth review of the related data and indicators would also be conducted in preparation for this meeting.

**Agenda Item 2:
MDG monitoring – the United Nations in the Caribbean**

(a) ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean

The Statistician at the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean provided the meeting with a status report on two projects related to this MDG project currently implemented by the office, namely *Improving Caribbean Household Surveys Project* and the project on *Interregional Cooperation on the Measurement of the Informal Sector and Informal Employment*.

The main objective of the household survey project was to promote the harmonization of methodologies, concepts and definitions of household surveys conducted in the region. Activities carried out by the project so far included the convening of an expert group meeting on harmonization of data and metadata, the collection of micro datasets of household surveys from seven countries, to date, in the region and the harmonization/systemization of those data sets to be uploaded to the ‘Caribbean Household Surveys Databank’ to be established at the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean. Finally, a regional training workshop to disseminate the major findings and to share best practices was to be convened later in 2009.

With regard to the informal sector project, he reported on a pilot survey conducted in Saint Lucia to help with the fine-tuning of the methodology and to establish technical guidelines to conduct surveys of the informal sector in the Caribbean. The outcomes of the pilot survey along with the derived survey methodology would be shared with interested stakeholders at a workshop to be held in July 2009.

The Gender Affairs Officer at the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean provided the meeting with a background of the mandate of the office in the area of gender development. In terms of gender and the fulfilment of the MDGs, she stressed the central role that gender played in the achievement of those goals underscoring the need to mainstream gender aspects into all eight development goals rather than exclusively focus on gender equality and women’s empowerment as articulated in Goal 3. To emphasize her point, she presented the results of a review of national reports from five Caribbean countries pointing to the fact that gender was exclusively tracked with respect to Goal 3. Further, monitoring of gender-related aspects of MDGs was further hindered by the notorious lack of sex-disaggregated data. In closing, she shared the accomplishments of a Gender Indicators Project carried out by ECLAC that had generated some 63 indicators based on available census data. Finally, she provided an overview of a Gender Equality Observatory to be launched later in 2009. The purpose of this observatory was to provide governments with a tool for assessing gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Discussion

The initial discussion focused mainly on two closely related topics, the need to guarantee access to micro data and a call to recognize the need to increase financial resources to data production, monitoring and reporting. While it was understood that access to micro-data could be a costly and time-consuming exercise new avenues, such as charging a fee for the provision of micro-data, as was the case in Jamaica, could be considered by NSOs to recover the costs. The representative from Saint Lucia shared his experience participating in the Accelerated Data Programme (ADP), an initiative funded by the World Bank that provided tools for data collection, standardization of meta-data and dissemination. Dominica was the second Caribbean country to benefit from this programme. Many countries indicated their willingness to share micro-data should appropriate anonymisation tools be made available. It was indicated that the World Bank and other organizations would provide such tools and ECLAC reported to be in the process of planning jointly with SPARC a regional training workshop on this topic.

Based on the fact that development planning would not be sustainable without sound empirical evidence, all participants agreed that more domestic resources should be made available to the NSOs to provide the requisite resources to fulfil the requirement to provide high quality, timely and relevant data to the planning and policy-making bodies.

The need to develop a consistent and coherent development framework to guide data collection, analysis and reporting was expressed. In the context of the present discussion, this was particularly stressed with regard to the need to develop clear and coherent concepts with regard to gender as well as the informal sector. A national development framework would also allow countries and their NSOs to prioritize their activities and to focus on those statistics and indicators most relevant to the national development agenda. In order to ensure gender mainstreaming in all statistical matters, the establishment of a gender unit in all NSOs was recommended by the Gender Affairs Officer of ECLAC.

Finally, all participants agreed to call on the international development community to increase cooperation, collaboration and coordination of their activities to avoid repetition and duplication of efforts. This was particularly important in relation to the upcoming census 2010 round preparations.

(b) ILO

In his presentation, the representative of ILO underscored the strong association between poverty eradication and employment. He suggested that the new target under Goal 1, 'to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people' be made a central objective of national and international development strategies. In terms of data to monitor the indicators for this target, aggregated data was generally available. He stressed the need to gain access to more specifically tabulated data and micro files and emphasized the need to improve related administrative records. Given the fact that administrative data did not provide sufficient information on issues such as out-of-school and unemployed youth or the informal sector, specialized surveys would be required to fill the gap. To enhance coordination of data

collection activities at the national level, he recommended the establishment of national survey commissions that would monitor and coordinate data collection and survey activities.

With reference to concepts used to define the informal sector, the meeting was informed that the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) had already reached a consensus in 2003. In the framework of the earlier cited ECLAC project on informal sector measurement, several countries, for example Jamaica, the Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago, had agreed on a common definition. Finally, the presenter gave a concise outline of the elements of decent work and the two widely accepted methodological concepts, the 'Decent Work Index' and the 'Human Development Index' used for its measuring. He provided details of the efforts being undertaken by the ILO in compiling labour market information and apprised the meeting of an ongoing project in the region aimed at harmonizing Labour Force Surveys and providing training to this effect.

Discussion

To clarify the role of the proposed national survey commissions, the representative of the ILO suggested their major role should be to oversee the planning and coordination of surveys and to ensure, at the country level, the involvement of NSOs in these processes. This would streamline the work of all actors involved and thus increase their efficiency and the timeliness of the expected outputs.

With regard to improved access to data and statistics, various options were discussed. While some participants favored the production of a series of standard tables that could be made available to a wider audience, others emphasised the need to provide micro data samples to allow for more profound data analysis. The Retrieval of Data for small areas by Microcomputer (REDATAM), a tool to facilitate analysis and dissemination of micro-data from household surveys and censuses developed and provided by ECLAC, would offer a reasonable platform for data analysis and data sharing.

In response to concerns regarding improving and harmonizing data on employment and the labour market, a call was made to promote standardized survey instruments and analysis methodologies. To facilitate the use of the International Standard Classifications of Occupations (ISCO) 2008 nomenclature, training was urgently needed, particularly for the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). While some countries indicated willingness to update the underlying concepts and nomenclature currently in use, others expressed concerns related to interruptions of time-series and costs caused by the introduction of these new approaches. In order to reach a Caribbean-wide consensus on labour market indicators, the ILO representative suggested that CARICOM convene a high level meeting, involving potential donors to secure the necessary funding. It was suggested that REDATAM could also be used for the analysis and dissemination of labour market statistics.

**Agenda Item 3:
Presentations on achievements and challenges in MDG monitoring**

(a) UNFPA

The representative of UNFPA indicated that the scope of MDG monitoring within his organization was limited to Goal 1 ‘Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger’, Goal 3 ‘Promote gender equality and empower women’, Goal 5 ‘Improve maternal health’, and Goal 6 ‘Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases’. In fulfilment of those goals, the UNFPA had provided support to countries in the region in the areas of research and capacity-building in monitoring and reporting. With regard to Goal 1, key achievements included the implementation of the Demographic Module for Poverty Analysis and Projection (DMPAP) and research on topics such as adolescent fertility and the demographic impact of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) on the region. Data availability was identified to be one of the major challenges. To respond to these challenges, UNFPA had assisted in data collection and processing and also in research and adolescent delivery patterns. Achievements with respect to Goal 3 were in the provision of technical assistance and the main focus was on adolescent sexual and reproductive health including HIV/AIDS prevention and improving maternal health with regard to Goals 5 and 6. Support provided by UNFPA included the provision of reproductive health equipment to hospitals and training in the use of this technical equipment. The main challenges in the achievement of Goals 5 and 6 were the need to improve education in antenatal care, to increase access to emergency obstetric care and the need to promote the use of contraception as a means towards the realization of those goals.

To enhance efficiency of donor support to the 2010 census round, a resource consortium was formed consisting of all donors in support of CARICOM activities related to the forthcoming census activities. This consortium consisted of United Nations agencies, bi- and multilateral donors, such as UNFPA, the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom, UNDP, ECLAC and others.

Discussion

The representative of Jamaica inquired if, instead of technical support, financial support could be made available given the fact that INSTAT would have sufficient capacity to conduct the census on their own. The UNFPA official however indicated that so far only technical assistance to enhance capacity-building could be offered.

In his intervention, the representative of the University of Technology, Jamaica, emphasized the need not to outsource development planning but to undertake efforts to better understand and express the region’s development needs. In this regard, he reminded the meeting of the original mandate that ECLAC had in the region which was to encourage and promote the independent development of appropriate models and approaches to guide this process. This thinking had been developed by Raúl Prebisch, an Argentine economist and ECLAC’s first Executive Secretary appointed in 1948. According to Prebisch, developing countries needed to focus on their own development and bring growth through primary internal reforms, rather than through external help. Prebisch further promoted preferential access to developed countries’

markets and regional integration as a means to strengthen the economies of developing countries and to enhance development. Based on these ideas, the representative reiterated his call that data collection, analysis and reporting should be guided by an overarching development concept for the countries and the region, as a whole.

(b) UNDP

The representative of UNDP reported on the status of implementation of cTTinfo, the national DevInfo platform. He presented a short video clip on this tool that allowed for the tracking of progress towards the achievement of the MDGs and Vision 2020 of Trinidad and Tobago. He also mentioned that national adaptations of DevInfo would also already be in use in CARICOM and in other countries of the region, such as Jamaica and Saint Lucia and that the majority of the other countries would be in the process of developing their own national DevInfo platforms. While he emphasized the usefulness of this platform, he also highlighted the fact that it could only be as good as the quality of the data in the system. Given the fact that Multi-Cluster Surveys (MICS) supported by UNICEF were one of the critical sources for data on women and children, he advocated the participation in these surveys.

He shared a draft project on MDG monitoring and costing which would also be related to monitoring the implementation of Trinidad and Tobago's Vision2020. This project was currently being discussed between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, UNDP and other United Nations agencies.

The final part of the presentation included a demonstration of 'manyeyes', a website developed by IBM that provided tools to visualize data more efficiently (accessible at <http://manyeyes.alphaworks.ibm.com/manyeyes/>).

(c) UNICEF

The representative of UNICEF provided an overview of her agency's mandate to advise governments of the region on the formulation of policies and programmes in the areas of child protection, health and family life. Assisting in the monitoring of the status of women and children in the region was also central to their work. To this effect, UNICEF was providing support to the development and administration of various rounds of MICS. She invited governments to take part in the present round and indicated that UNICEF would be in a position to provide technical and limited financial support to countries interested in this exercise. The speaker noted that MICS would be a particularly valid source for the generation of MDG-related indicators, such as infant and childhood mortality as well as maternal mortality rates, among others. While this and other household surveys would provide a wealth of information, the presenter was concerned about the lack of information on migrants, indigenous and stateless people that were often not captured through such surveys. She also emphasized the usefulness of DevInfo as a platform to analyze and share data with a wider public. Other areas of importance to UNICEF in the region were providing support to national budgeting for children, mapping and sharing of information on children and the promotion of the inclusion of children's issues in the 2010/11 census questionnaires. Further, her organization also assisted in areas such as harmonizing MDG data such as infant, childhood and maternal mortality rates as well as

HIV/AIDS, education and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) indicators. She further pointed out that reporting national averages would often exclude large population segments, such as migrants, stateless persons, indigenous persons, children, adolescents, single parents, the elderly and the disabled. She called on the countries and regional agencies to derive more disaggregated and harmonized data from national household surveys. She closed by remarking that MDG monitoring could not be fully achieved without taking into consideration the strengthening of systems that would support administrative data collection and management, such as child protection systems at the national level.

Discussion

The representative of the University of Technology, Jamaica, apprised the meeting of a study conducted in Jamaica in 2008 supported by the World Bank on estimates of rates of return for investment in early childhood development. The findings proposed improving early childhood education with a view of the country's development needs and suggested shifting the focus away from a mere technical skills transfers approach to a move towards a more profound method addressing all aspects of early childhood education at a later stage. He further proposed introducing competence-oriented education models to ensure certain levels of proficiency amongst those who would leave the education system instead of simply handing out attendance certificates that would neither reflect nor assess the actual skills of a student.

With regard to census planning, the representative of ECLAC updated the meeting on the activities currently undertaken by CARICOM in the region. He also noted that at present ECLAC had three demographers on staff and thus would be in an excellent position to assist the region in this matter. In response to a question concerning the restructuring and harmonization of census questionnaires to capture international migration, the representative from UNICEF indicated that this matter was being discussed at CARICOM. She also informed the meeting that UNICEF had recently undertaken a study on children and migration in the Caribbean (not published yet) and suggested including its findings in these discussions after the publication of the study. In addition it was noted that CARICOM had proposed the inclusion of a section on internal and external migration and specific aspects related to the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) in the census.

Agenda Item 4: MDG monitoring at a country level

Results of the ECLAC survey

The representative of ECLAC presented the main findings of a survey conducted among NSOs in the region to assess the status of MDG/IADG monitoring and reporting. The survey revealed that the production of statistics was quite fragmented and in many instances, depending on the country and the specific indicators, there was a considerable lack of coordination and collaboration among government agencies in charge of data collection and those with responsibility for reporting. The study also identified considerable gaps between countries in the

region in terms of general data availability and reporting capacity. The study could also identify common areas of concern, such as data on the environment, education, health, gender, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. While most countries seemed to collect a wealth of administrative data, they quite often lacked the appropriate tools and mechanisms to transfer this information into relevant indicators and to establish an appropriate reporting system. Further, the question of data quality and timeliness of the information provided seemed to be a challenge for almost all countries that had participated in the survey. In closing, she highlighted some of the initiatives that had been and/or were currently being undertaken in the region by various intergovernmental bodies and development partners, such as CARICOM, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), UNDP and others and lamented the obvious lack of cooperation and coordination among these institutions that often caused repetition and/or duplication of efforts.

Country briefs – status of MDG reporting

The country representatives were given an opportunity to present short briefs on the status of MDG monitoring and reporting, to share best practices and to identify areas in need of support.

(a) Jamaica

In Jamaica, the responsibility for data collection and dissemination was divided among the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) and the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ). MDG reporting fell directly under the purview of the PIOJ and in fulfilment of that responsibility the institution produced an annual country report. Data collection in support of MDG monitoring was conducted by STATIN as well as other statistical divisions operating in various line ministries.

The two main challenges in data collection and analysis were the differences in the spatial/geographical boundaries and differing concepts and definitions used by the various data collecting agencies and STATIN. Incongruence in the legislation governing the modus operandi of the different ministries and STATIN caused problems with access and timeliness of the data. A revision of the Statistics Act was considered important to enable STATIN to carry out its overall mandate as a data collecting agency. To address the fragmentation of data collection in the country, the establishment of national standards for data collection was suggested to ensure comparability and compatibility of the data.

In terms of data dissemination, both institutions had collaborated to establish and launch Jamaica's version of DevInfo, to provide access to indicators generated from the annual surveys of living conditions (SLCs), quarterly labour force surveys (LFSs) and the MICS.

It was reported that with the assistance of the national statistics agency of Sweden 'Statistics Sweden' and the National Environmental Planning Agency (NEPA), STATIN was able to produce one "State of the Environment" report.

(b) Suriname

The representative of Suriname emphasized that differences in geographical boundaries and the application of differing concepts and definitions by different data collecting entities was not unique to Jamaica but also posed a problem in Suriname. With regard to health indicators, the Ministry of Health was the main institution responsible for their production, however, discrepancies were known to exist between the indicators produced by that ministry and those generated with data from the MICS. The MICS results were overstating the situation on mortality and infant mortality and therefore not reflecting the real picture of Suriname. The figures produced by Public Health were more realistic. Additional discrepancies existed at the national level with the derivation of infant mortality rates based on differences in the definition of a “live birth”. With reference to indicators regarding Goal 6, HIV/AIDS prevalence, the representative suggested the inclusion of other indicators, such as the prevalence of lifestyle-related chronic diseases (diabetes and heart diseases) that would have more relevance to the country than the indicators listed under Goal 6. The representative further indicated that while previously there seemed to have been greater interest in collaboration with the Bureau of Statistics in MDG monitoring and reporting, there was an increasing trend in ministries and other government entities to first publish information on their data collection activities before providing the Bureau of Statistics causing delays in MDG reporting.

Concerning Goal 7, environmental sustainability, a publication was produced annually jointly by the Bureau of Statistics and the Institute of the Environment. Notwithstanding that and other strides that were being made with the collection of statistics related to the environment, the lack of very specific technical experience in that area had affected proper target setting and consequently the monitoring of some aspects of environmental sustainability.

Availability of funding to conduct surveys within a certain time frame to produce an update on some MDG indicators seemed to be one of the major challenges on the way to establish mechanisms for continued MDG monitoring and reporting. While support from international donors was considered important, the dependency on foreign aid was not considered sustainable and thus a strong call was made to lobby for domestic resources for this effort.

Discussion

The question as to how to address discrepancies between various data sources for specific indicators generated much discussion. One participant suggested reporting both values and providing information on the origin of the data as well as on the calculation methodologies applied. In this context it was stated that the more data would become available from different sources, the greater the discrepancies could be expected. Therefore, it was recommended to focus on the better understanding of these discrepancies and to recognize that in most instances these discrepancies would have been caused by methodological differences and thus could not be eliminated or even reconciled. The representative of Trinidad and Tobago then suggested choosing those indicators that seemed to be more reliable and providing the relevant methodological information on their generation.

(c) Saint Lucia

The representative of Saint Lucia reported that their household budget surveys (HHBs) and their SLCs, last conducted in 2006, were the main data sources for poverty-related indicators. The inclusion of questions on contraceptive prevalence in the next round of SLCs financed by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) was expected to facilitate a better monitoring of progress towards achieving that target under Goal 5. The measurement of progress towards achievements made with respect to Goal 1, target 1 (*proportion of population living below \$1 (PPP) per day*) continued to pose a challenge to Saint Lucia and most other countries in the region since they were not participating in the International Comparison Programme (ICP) that produced internationally comparable price levels, economic aggregates in real terms, and Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) estimates. Therefore most countries in the region produced national poverty lines that served as a baseline for their poverty estimates.

With regard to literacy, the country was supported by Statistics Canada to prepare a comprehensive literacy survey. This survey, the first in almost 20 years, was expected to be administered between April and August 2009 to a sample of 4000 respondents. The survey methodology was in line with internationally recommended standards to ensure international comparability of its results. It was suggested that countries wishing to engage in a similar exercise should consult with CARICOM to seek assistance through a recently signed 'Regional Public Goods' project that would provide support to Literary Assessment and Monitoring Programs (LAMPs) developed by UNESCO in the region.

On the issue of the discrepancies arising from the use of different spatial definitions, the presenter suggested the use of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) to facilitate capturing residential buildings. He further reported that the CSO in collaboration with various line ministries had launched a national version of DevInfo, 'HelenInfo', to monitor MDG goals at the national level. In order to enhance information available on data and meta data, two staff members had participated recently in a training course to establish a Statistical Data and Meta Data (SDMX) platform¹.

With regard to statistics on the environment, some basic indicators were being collected and an environmental statistics compendium had been released. In order to ensure sustainability, there was a need for support from regional agencies to develop statistical capacity in this area.

Discussion

The topic of the literacy survey generated substantive interest in the survey instrument and data collection procedures. In response to a question on the comparability of the survey instrument, the representative of Saint Lucia explained that the indicators of the LAMP and other

¹ The SDMX Content-Oriented Guidelines recommend practices for creating interoperable data and metadata sets using the SDMX technical standards. They are envisaged to be applicable generically across statistical subject-matter domains. The Guidelines focus on the harmonization of specific concepts and terminology that are common to a large number of statistical domains. Such harmonisation is useful for achieving even more efficient exchange of comparable data and metadata and builds on the experience gained in implementations to date (source: <http://sdmx.org/>)

literacy surveys followed internationally agreed upon standards and thus would only be adapted to a rather limited extent to the national context.

In response to the recommendation to use GPS technology, the representative of the United States Virgin Islands reported on his country's positive experience using GPS technology in densely populated areas. He highlighted the accuracy of the tool but also pointed to the high costs of such units.

(d) Netherlands Antilles

The meeting was apprised of the constitutional changes that would result in the disbanding of the Netherlands Antilles into two autonomous countries (Curacao and St. Maarten) and the three smaller islands (Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius) would then become municipalities directly under the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This new development would have implications on reporting since the islands would then be reporting as separate entities rather than a collective whole.

As with Saint Lucia, the Netherlands Antilles faced similar challenges with reporting on poverty (Goal 1, target 1). In 2008 a poverty line (US\$1150 a month for a family of four persons) had been established for Curacao and was now being used to calculate of its poverty gap ratio. Poverty lines still had to be calculated for the other islands of the Netherlands Antilles using the same methodology.

In closing, the representative sought insight from the NSOs in the region on their practices with regard to MDG reporting i.e. whether reporting was limited to MDG indicators under the Millennium Declaration or if it would also include other indicators relevant for national policy development.

Discussion

Regarding literacy surveys, the representative of Trinidad and Tobago recommended that for reasons of comparability it would be useful to follow the recommended guidelines for LAMPs. Additionally, reference was made to efforts undertaken under the leadership of CARICOM to establish a working group to develop a set of Caribbean specific MDG indicators. The outcomes of the first meeting of this group had been presented to the 7th Meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) of CARICOM in November 2008. This expanded list was adopted by COHSOD and was currently circulated among CARICOM member States for their further consideration.

(e) Dominica

To date, one MDG report had been released for Dominica. Key inputs into this report were the findings of the last country poverty assessment (CPA). Challenges reported were related to the collection of data on HIV/AIDS prevalence, condom use and contraceptive use. The country was currently engaged in a CPA that would have components of an SLC and a household budget survey (HBS). It was expected that this would provide the major input for the

second MDG report. Health and education-related data were reported to be available and were currently reviewed with the respective line ministries.

With respect to environmental statistics, issues of inadequate staffing were reported to have affected the collection of related data. However, through the assistance of STATIN (Jamaica) and the NSO of Belize, the country was able to produce its first national environment report.

To address the lack of information on unemployment, the representative suggested adding a shortened version of LFS to the forthcoming census.

Discussion

On the issue of contraceptive prevalence data, the representative of the Bahamas noted the challenge with the collection of data for those indicators, since their source were mainly the clinics and other health facilities that would not provide age- or sex-disaggregated data.

In respect of labour force data, the ILO official informed the meeting that his organization was currently in discussion with the OECS on a project to establish LFSs formally in the OECS member countries. This would include a review of the LFS methodology used in Jamaica concerning its applicability to other countries in the region. He further elaborated on the idea to include labour force models into SLCs and pointed out that Saint Lucia had already some experience in this regard. His final remarks related to the question as to how to get information on the labour market without costly surveys and suggested that possibly data from the National Insurance Boards (NISs) could be used as a basis to estimate the scope of formal employment in the region. However, he was aware of the fact that these data would not include information either on the self-employed or the informal sector which was considerable in the Caribbean. In conclusion, he advocated for a close collaboration among agencies that conducted surveys and those that provided administrative data.

(f) Grenada

The situation in Grenada with respect to MDG reporting was similar to what had already been reported by other OECS countries. MDG monitoring initially was overseen by a national MDG committee, with the Ministry of Planning responsible for monitoring and the NSO for its dissemination. However, due to the inactivity of the MDG committee, the country had not been able maintain its earlier monitoring and reporting efforts.

The CPA, conducted in 2007, was expected to provide data on poverty in the country and it was expected that these data would serve as a baseline to revise the 1998 established national poverty line of EC\$200. Regarding labour indicators, the CSO was currently concluding an agreement with the ILO on the use of continuous sample surveys to help with the compilation of labour market statistics. In terms of monitoring Goals 5, 6 and 7, the Ministry of Health was reported to be the primary source for data; however the responsibility of data dissemination was with the NSO. Despite the existence of a Ministry of the Environment, not much information

was available and the representative expressed the need to give more attention to data on this subject.

Discussion

In response to the challenges currently experienced by many smaller OECS member States, the representative of Jamaica proposed the provision of technical assistance through staff of her institution for a fee to countries in the region. This would support national capacity-building in the receiving NSOs while affording STATIN an opportunity to gain revenues. This idea found strong support in the audience particularly given the fact that some countries in the region indicated that they had already benefited from such arrangements. The participants agreed that acceptable and affordable fees would need to be worked out and that possibly the ECLAC Skills Bank could be a repository for institutionalizing such a mechanism.

(g) The Bahamas

The representative of the Bahamas reported that a draft MDG report was prepared in 2007 which was currently reviewed. She further reported that the national MDG committee consisted of two segments; the first composed of permanent secretaries of the line ministries and the Director of the NSO and the second a technical committee that was responsible for data collection from various sources. However, the national MDG Committee was active in a more informal setting among the technical group.

Shortcomings in education and health data were also reported. The major challenges in the area of education were accounting for school drop-outs and determining the accurate literacy rate. The question as to how to measure tertiary level education was being investigated since most nationals would pursue advanced education abroad. In order to address the lack of data on literacy, the presenter informed the meeting that information on a LAMP survey had been obtained and that such a survey was being considered under the CARICOM umbrella.

The representative also noted the need for improvements in areas such as vital statistics and HIV/AIDS monitoring. On the latter, she reported that the country received support through the Bill Clinton Foundation. Their strong AIDS Secretariat produced sound and up-to-date HIV/AIDS data by age and sex on a regular basis, however, more detailed data on issues such as children orphaned by AIDS would not be available.

With regard to environmental statistics, there were several gaps in the recording and monitoring of environmental data, however, efforts were underway to address this deficiency. As it relates to DevInfo, efforts were being undertaken through CARICOM to conduct training in the use of DevInfo for all relevant stakeholders in an effort to enhance utilization of this tool.

Discussion

In light of the comments made by the representative of Bahamas on the challenge with collecting education data, an appeal was made by the representative of the University of

Technology of Jamaica for assistance from regional agencies such as UNICEF and UNESCO with monitoring in the area of education.

Concerning HIV/AIDS monitoring, mentioning was made of the fact that no information was available on persons tested and treated abroad and in private practices and which would not be included in the accounts prepared by the public health system. Therefore a call was made to include private health facilities in the reporting mechanisms on HIV/AIDS.

(h) CARICOM Secretariat

The CARICOM Secretariat's contribution was presented via teleconference by the Director of the Statistics Sub-Programme, who stated that the Secretariat's function was to service the integration process in monitoring MDGs and IADGs. She then outlined the different frameworks to assist the region in the implementation and monitoring of MDGs/IADGs that included the incorporation of MDGs in the list of indicators for the regional statistical programme, statistical capacity building, efforts towards harmonization and a focus on improving civil registration systems and vital statistics.

The major focus of the presentation was on the outcomes of the 17th Meeting of COHSOD convened in November 2008 that had adopted an expanded MDG indicators list and supported the inclusion of gender-based violence as a target. It had further voiced a renewed emphasis on strengthening data collection systems and on addressing issues of staff retention and training.

Discussion

In response to the question on the next strategic step for the organization, the CARICOM representative noted that given the formal adoption of Caribbean specific MDGs by CARICOM member States, these goals could now be formally included in the organization's work programme.

On the issue of gaps in administrative data, CARICOM indicated they would be able to provide support in that area to countries in need. She also noted the establishment of a CARICOM advisory group on this topic.

The DevInfo platform received high commendation and its enormous usefulness in interconnecting line ministries and the CSO as well as its positive impact on stimulating data collection was once again reiterated. The Social Indicators and Social Indicators and Millennium Development Goals (SIMDG) committee was identified as another medium for facilitating the coordination of data collection activities among the line ministries, CSO and other administrative data collection systems.

(i) Trinidad and Tobago

Data was produced by the various line ministries and the CSO had the central responsibility for the collection of data from those sources. In terms of MDG reporting, the

Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment was responsible for the preparation of the report. Three draft reports had been prepared to date (but none yet published), the most recent being the 2007 report which was currently being edited. The SLC was the main source in the country for poverty data and consistent with what had been articulated by the other countries to the meeting, the US\$1 PPP/day as poverty indicator was not in use at present. Considerable gaps in literacy data were reported since the last literacy survey had been conducted in 1995. Administrative data on MDG related topics were weak and challenges reported in relation to data quality, timeliness and methodologies applied.

Data on the environment was produced by the CSO in collaboration with the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA), the Meteorological Office and the Environmental Management Authority (EMA). A compendium of environmental statistics had been released and work was in progress on the publication of a second report. It was noted that the involvement of the Ministry of Environment was limited since this ministry's priority was policy formulation rather than data collection.

On a general note the representative called for strengthening the role of the CSO since, according to their Statistics Act, the CSO should be the central body responsible for data collection. He further recognized the need for the establishment of a multi-stakeholder team dedicated to coordinate and collaborate on issues related to data collection, monitoring and reporting.

With reference to the country's national version of the DevInfo platform 'cTTinfo', the meeting was informed that the CSO was currently assisted by the UNDP to establish and populate this data platform. He emphasized the positive role of this tool to promote intra ministerial cooperation and collaboration. It was further reported that at present various line ministries were encouraged to upload their own data, to utilize the tool and to receive training in the usage of the application as needed. The speaker closed by indicating that while there was progress in certain areas, resource constraints and logistical and organizational challenges would need to be overcome to fully utilize cTTinfo in the future. To advance the user-friendliness of cTTinfo, a data administration platform would need to be developed and added to the system.

Discussion

In response to the presentation, the representative of Jamaica spoke to her experience in the use of JamStats and raised questions on how issues of data quality and base line data were being addressed. She pointed out the need to address accessibility and usability of administrative datasets and often observed underreporting. In that regard she referred to a publication by Robert Pember on the use of administrative data which she recommended to the NSOs in the region. With regard to statistics acts, she spoke specifically to the vagueness of the clause in the acts of some countries, which outlined one of the functions of the statistical office as the "general coordination of statistics activities" and noted that this was particularly evident in the Statistics Acts of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. Belize, she noted, had recently amended their Act to provide more specific responsibilities. She called for a general review of the Statistics Acts in the region and emphasized the need to update those acts to accommodate the needs of NSOs in the twenty-first century. In her country, the Act was being reviewed and one of the recommendations

was the establishment of a Statistics Commission that would have authority over all statistical operations in the country.

The representative of the ILO shared his experience with compiling labour statistics from administrative records of ministries of labour and national insurance offices. He pointed to some issues to be considered in assessing the value of administrative records as a source of data, but affirmed the usefulness of the data once the requisite protocols and systems were in place. This latter point was well endorsed by the meeting.

There was strong support for the use of DevInfo. Attention was drawn to the strengths of the database tool and in particular to its usefulness to facilitate consistency checks.

The participants suggested convening a meeting for statisticians/directors of statistical offices in the region to discuss the issues of quality, use and access to administrative data sets. In light of the concerns expressed about the use of administrative data in the region, the Director of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean suggested the commissioning of a study aimed at identifying gaps and determining ways of improving administrative data. This suggestion would be put on the agenda of the upcoming Fifth General Meeting of the United Nations and Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and its Associated Institutions.

(j) University of Technology, Jamaica

The representative of this institution reported on his involvement as a consultant in an MDG scorecard and costing project in Belize. The purpose of the project was to review the status of three indicators for the following Goals: Goal 3: “Share of women in the non-agricultural sector”, Goal 4: “under five mortality” and Goal 7: “Proportion of land covered by forests”, and to model the costs to achieve these indicators. He stressed the importance of a comprehensive national development plan that would guide the overall analysis as well as the more focused review of the selected areas. Given the fact that none of the Goals could be achieved in isolation, he also advocated for a shift from a sector-specific approach to cross-sectoral programming and development planning and promoted the application of a sector-wide approach (SwAp) for the project to ensure inclusion of all relevant stakeholders in this exercise. The expected outcomes of this project were the following:

- The development of a realistic plan to achieve the selected MDGs;
- Improved donor coordination at the national level;
- Enhanced consensus regarding a national development agenda;
- Increased results orientation; and
- A shift from sector-specific approaches to cross-sectoral approaches in development planning.

Discussion

The presenter further explained that development was a long-term commitment and would not be achieved overnight. Regarding the region's need for skills and the considerable negative impact of the brain-drain on the region, he indicated that while it was recognized that the region's migrants' skills would be needed, a more viable and sustainable option would be to attract skilled labour from other parts of the world to fill the skills gaps in the region.

(k) St. Kitts and Nevis

As in other countries in the Caribbean, St. Kitts and Nevis also reported on the establishment of an MDG committee with the task of monitoring the country's progress towards the achievement of these goals. But, similar to other countries reviewed, this committee had been inactive and consequently no progress had been achieved with respect to MDG reporting.

In terms of production of data, basic information was currently available from different line ministries. While several administrative records would not be produced for monitoring purposes, data for the production of health indicators was readily available from the Ministry of Health. For the other indicators, recent surveys such as the 2007/2008 Survey of Living Conditions/Poverty Assessment and the Labour Force Survey conducted in 2004 were identified as key sources of data. It was hoped that a Literacy Survey could be conducted in the near future, possibly even prior to the forthcoming population census, however this was not seen as achievable in the given short period of time. Inadequate and insufficient staffing levels were identified as the main challenge in relation to MDG monitoring and reporting. The production of environmental statistics was limited due to understaffing and insufficient resources. As such, data was only available on forest coverage.

In terms of DevInfo, the national data platform was expected to be launched by mid-year (2009), however to be only used by the NSO at this point in time.

(l) St. Vincent and the Grenadines

MDG monitoring was presently overseen by a SIMDG committee that would also have oversight over the development of the national DevInfo platform and MDGs monitoring and reporting, with the CSO assuming prime responsibility for data collection. Challenges with data collection were similar to those expressed by the other country representatives. The Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education were reported to be the main sources for data on health and education indicators, respectively; however timely access to these data was reported to be a challenge. Concerning data for Goal 1, the 2008 SLC was identified as the key source for data. While hunger in the country was addressed with school feeding programmes administered under the Ministry of Education and the Nutrition Support Unit, statistics such as actual students fed, number of meals provided, etc. were not available. The general monitoring of undernourished children was the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and it was reported that data on this topic would be available. Sex-disaggregated data on the nutrition status of children under five was not available. A Growth Monitoring Pilot Project (GMPP) was currently being undertaken by the Ministry of Health. In relation to education, universal education was promoted in the

country, but so far legislation for compulsory education had not been implemented. It was further noted that CARICOM had been instrumental in providing training in DevInfo on two occasions. The launch of a national adaptation of DevInfo had originally been scheduled for 2008, however, it was being delayed due to the lack of data available for the platform.

(m) United States Virgin Islands

Unlike the situation in other countries of the region, the responsibility for data collection and dissemination did not reside within one central statistical office. Instead, data was produced by several agencies including the Planning Office, the Bureau of Economic Research and the Census Office.

Demographic surveys conducted annually since 2001, as well as the censuses were identified as the key data sources for MDG monitoring in the country. In terms of indicators to assess the levels of poverty and hunger, the government had adopted a minimum annual salary of US\$20,000 for the public and private sectors. Poverty among children and female-headed households was monitored applying the United States defined poverty line and according to these standards, more than 20% of this population subgroup was defined to be poor.

In the area of gender equality, efforts were being made to ensure that increased numbers of women would occupy executive posts. While women still did not occupy to a sufficient extent chief executive positions, notable increases were evident in the number of females in professional jobs. Also a raise in male employment in traditional female jobs, such as nursing, was evident. With regard to education, available data revealed reasonable achievements in some of the goals. The major challenge in education, however, was providing access to children of migrants, particularly from Spanish-speaking countries. Also, more information would be needed to assess school drop-out rates and to identify the factors that contributed to the rising number of drop-outs in middle and high-schools.

Considerable progress was reported in monitoring health indicators and particularly HIV/AIDS related statistics. Based on the assumption that the disease was more prevalent among migrants, a survey was planned to be conducted in the near future. To identify health insurance coverage a survey was conducted in 2002 and in order to update the information available, a further survey was planned.

Regarding environmental statistics, few deficiencies in the monitoring and production of statistics were reported.

(n) Antigua and Barbuda

The Statistics Division (SD) of Antigua and Barbuda was reported to currently undergo a significant overhaul and refurbishment that was expected to result in improvements in its physical, cultural and institutional arrangements. Progress had been made in the recruitment of statisticians and in streamlining the functions of the different sections in the Division.

Bound by the Statistics Act, the Statistics Division was the entity generally responsible for data collection, analysis and reporting. Data in support of MDG monitoring was provided by the Division but reporting undertaken by the Ministry of Planning. The SD had proposed a meeting with other data collecting entities within the government to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

As in many other OECS countries, various household surveys had been conducted in Antigua and Barbuda and the related reports were available. Health statistics referring to the public sector were timely and readily available, however, deficiencies were noted in relation to information from the private sector.

In terms of environmental statistics, there was a need for training to develop institutional capacity in the collection of such data.

Discussion

In response to the contributions by the country representatives on the collection of environment statistics, the Statistician at the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean drew attention to work that had been done by the CARICOM Secretariat in drafting a list of environmental statistics which were in line with the MDGs. He then provided some insight into his experience as a statistician in Belize and noted that the commitment of resources to the recruitment of staff that were trained in the collection of such data was paramount to tackling the deficiency.

Agenda Item 5: Summary and recommendations

The following are the main suggestions and recommendations of the two-day meeting:

(a) Given the abundance of skills in the region, there was a need for the development of a skills databank to provide easier access to expertise available to the region. It was suggested that the ECLAC Skills Database could serve as an initial platform.

(b) Access to data seemed to be one of the major challenges in the region. This challenge, however, was faced at different levels within a country at the national level as well as at the regional and international levels (between countries and United Nations agencies and other development partners). To improve data sharing at the national level, national data sharing mechanism would need to be established involving all critical stakeholders that used and produced data.

(c) With regard to data sharing at the regional/international level, the need for data anonymizing software and training was articulated. Countries generally indicated increased willingness to share micro-data if such a tool would be available.

(d) The meeting also recognized the costs that would arise with the provision of access to micro-data and suggested the establishment of mechanisms that would allow the sale of such data.

(e) Given the fact that while some countries were still in need of building capacity, others would be in a position to provide technical assistance for a fee to those in need. This would provide an income to those in need of financial support whereas other countries would get easier access to the technical skills they lacked. These differences in skills development and availability should also be taken into consideration by the bi- and multilateral donors and it was suggested to introduce more flexibility in their assistance programmes to accommodate the specific needs of a given country.

(f) The meeting identified a need to address differences in geographical boundaries applied by various data collection entities and their impact on further statistical analysis.

(g) The need to address the quality of administrative data was articulated. It was recognized that most of those data were not collected for statistical purposes and thus would need to be 'transformed' into appropriate data for further use as a monitoring tool.

(h) Of particular importance seems to be the need to build capacity in the area of environmental statistics. Almost all countries reported lack of qualified staff and only limited data available to report on this subject.

(i) Gaps between administrative and survey data were reported to be considerable at times (for example, infant and childhood mortality) and thus, mechanisms would need to be developed to guide data users in understanding the respective data source and to enhance judgment concerning choosing the more reliable indicator for reporting purposes.

(j) While reviewing selected indicators and statistics was important, this would be of limited value to the countries and the region as a whole without a profound overarching development concept that would guide data collection, monitoring, analysis and planning. Thus a call was made to all participants and ECLAC to revisit this subject and to provide a platform for exchange of ideas concerning nationally owned development plans and strategies.

Agenda Item 6: Closure of the meeting

Ms. Karoline Schmid of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean brought the meeting to a close by extending thanks to the participants for their active participation and valuable contributions to the discussions. The participants also joined in expressing their satisfaction at the openness of the discussions of the two-day meeting.

Annex I**AGENDA**Monday 2 February 2009

- 8.30 a.m. – 9.00 a.m. Registration
- 9.00 a.m. – 9.30 a.m. Item 1: *Opening Session*
- Welcome by the Director, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean
 - MDG/IADG DA Account project – overview
Karoline Schmid, ECLAC
- 9.30 a.m. – 10.45 a.m. Item 2: *MDG monitoring - UN*
- ECLAC: *Mr. Sylvan Roberts*
 - ECLAC : *Ms. Sheila Stuart*
 - ILO: *Mr. Reynold Simmons.*
- 10.45 a.m. – 11.00 a.m. *Coffee break*
- 11.00 a.m. – 12.15 p.m. Item 3: *MDG monitoring in the Caribbean: achievements and challenges*
- UNFPA: *Mr. Glen Smith*
 - UNDP: *Mr. Edo Storck*
 - UNICEF: *Ms. Violet Warnery*
- 12.15 p.m. – 1.45 p.m. *Lunch*
- 1.45 p.m. – 3.15 p.m. Item 3 (cont'd): Questions & Discussion
- 3.15 a.m. – 3.30 p.m. *Coffee break*
- 3.30 p.m. – 5.00 p.m. Item 4: *MDG monitoring at the country level*
- Results of ECLAC Survey
Karoline Schmid
 - Country briefs

Tuesday 3 February 2009

- 9.00 a.m. – 10.00 a.m. Item 4 cont'd: *MDG monitoring at the country level*
- Country briefs, cont'd
- 10.00 a.m. – 10.15 a.m. *Coffee Break*
- 10.15 a.m. – 12.00 p.m. Item 5: *Summary and Recommendations: The way forward*
- Identify major areas of concern and discuss possible strategies and recommendations
- 12.00 p.m. Closure

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