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REPORT OF THE MEETING ON DEVELOPING AN AGENDA TO ADDRESS EQUITY GAPS IN CARIBBEAN SIDS

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Introduction

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) convened a two-day expert group meeting on *Developing an Agenda to Address Equity Gaps in Caribbean SIDS* in Port of Spain, Trinidad, on 28-29 June 2005.

The meeting sought to provide experts from the member and associate member States of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) with an opportunity to explore the available analytical tools used to assess inequality and strengthen the evidence-based approach to social policy formulation. This would result in more effective social policy and programming to reduce poverty and other inequalities. The substantive issues on the agenda to be addressed were:

(a) The use of the Gini coefficient in identifying income inequality for policy formulation;

(b) Gender equity and the use of gender indicators; and

(c) Measures of vulnerability and their uses.

Nine CDCC member and associate member countries attended, namely: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago. There was also participation from independent consultants and several organizations, such as: Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organiation (PAHO/WHO), International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Department for International Development (DFID). The list of participants of the meeting is attached as Annex I.

The meeting followed the revised agenda as follows:

1. Welcome and opening remarks;
2. Exploring a measure of social vulnerability at the national level;
3. Gender equity and the use of gender indicators;
4. The use of the Gini Coefficient in identifying income inequity;
5. Overview of the CWIQ;
6. Working Groups;
    a. Developing an agenda to reduce equity gaps at the national level

7. Report of the Working Groups;

8. Closure

Agenda item 1:
Welcome and opening remarks

Welcome and opening remarks were delivered by the ECLAC representative, Mr. Rudolf Buitelaar, Deputy Director. He expressed his satisfaction that experts from many countries of the region were gathered to address equity gaps in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and to chart a way forward to rectifying the many gender imbalances present in Caribbean societies. He reaffirmed the need for more evidenced-based social policy, evident in the Millennium Declaration through which governments have committed to the reduction of poverty and hunger. ECLAC's diligence in the area of measuring progress achieved by Latin America and the Caribbean in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has allowed the organization to extract two main lessons regarding the MDGs in the Caribbean. Firstly, little space was dedicated to the articulation of the Caribbean perspective and, as such, the true situation was not adequately understood or acknowledged. Secondly, such a subregional viewpoint was difficult to establish because of the lack of data, pointing directly to the need for strengthening the data gathering process and enhancing the capacity to analyze the data. Nonetheless there was the need to match intensive measurement efforts with in-depth analysis of public policies, and it was Mr. Buitelaar's hope that the meeting would indeed develop an agenda to strengthen the use of these tools in the policies geared to poverty reduction in support of the fulfilment of the MDGs.

Agenda item 2:
Exploring a measure of social vulnerability at the national level

The ECLAC Social Affairs Officer, with responsibility for Social Policy and Poverty Eradication, Ms. Asha Kambon, made a presentation entitled: *Measures of Vulnerability, their relevance and uses at the national and sub-national level.* She defined the notion of vulnerability in its multi-dimensional context and suggested use could be made of the definition which was agreed to at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, convened in Kobe, Japan, December 2005. At that conference, vulnerability was defined as "the conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes, which increase the susceptibility of a community to the impact of hazards". She suggested that essential to appreciating the notion of vulnerability was an understanding of the two opposing concepts of susceptibility and resilience or sustainability.

Ms. Kambon explored the usefulness of measuring vulnerability and suggested that the benefits to be derived were threefold. Firstly, as a single value measure of vulnerability, it could be considered by donor counties and organizations in reallocation of financial aid and other technical assistance. Secondly, the measure could demonstrate the difference of small States as a group in the global market place, thus affording them additional space for maneuverability and sustainable development. Finally, a vulnerability measure could have value as an additional measure of the complexity of development processes for small States. In regard to social vulnerability, she felt that it was important to remind participants of the difference between poverty and vulnerability which, she suggested, by describing poverty as a static measure which focused on a lack of resources, whereas vulnerability was a dynamic measure which addressed the interplay between susceptibility and resilience.

An overview of the three existing measures of vulnerability: the Global Environmental Index (GEVI) which has been the work of South Pacific (SOPAC); the Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI), spearheaded in the main by the Commonwealth Secretariat; and the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) spearheaded by the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, was presented. Participants were reminded that the work undertaken in regard to the development of the SVI was in no way as advanced as the work which had been undertaken on the other measures of vulnerability. Despite this, the domains of each index were discussed and the rank and measure of vulnerability derived for selected Caribbean SIDS according to the various measures were presented.

A case study on the use of the social vulnerability measure at the subnational level in the undertaking of disaster assessment was presented. The case study was based on data gathered in the course of work undertaken following Hurricane Ivan in the Caribbean. Two matrices, one of social susceptibility and the other of social resilience were presented. The presentation concluded that there was need to incorporate vulnerability analysis in poverty reduction work as it should result in better targeted activity for building resilience and measurable outcomes; it should lead to reduced susceptibility to risks and threats; and should be incorporated into our broad development framework as it may lead to more realistic national goal setting, particularly in the achievement of growth targets and sustainable development targets.

Following the presentation, the floor was opened for comments, clarification and discussion of vulnerability, generally, and of social vulnerability, in particular, as this was the measure which had been spearheaded by the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean. Participants thanked Ms. Kambon for her presentation and stated that the presentation was possibly the best start for the meeting as it allowed participants to place the issues of measures of equity gaps, into their broadest policy perspective.

The participants agreed that it was indeed necessary for vulnerability to address issues of susceptibility and resilience in all the domains of measurement, as it currently did. However, they expressed hope, that barring all the constraints which face data management in the Caribbean subregion that, as work continued on the development and testing of the social vulnerability index, there would be scope for enlarging the number of indicators used in the construction of the index. Two indicators were suggested, housing and labour.

Participants queried how the indicator of ethnicity could be included in the SVI as it appeared to be a driving factor in many forms of inequality. Regarding social security and social order, participants expressed the hope that in the future, the number of indicators could be increased in this area, thus providing a fuller picture of the issue. Suggestions included indicators of gender-based violence and child abuse. It was agreed by the meeting that the unavailability/non-existence, lack of comparability of relevant or suitable data across countries lay at the basis of the non inclusion of what appeared to be relevant indicators in the measurement of social vulnerability. The meeting also noted that the construction of such an index had to make use of reliable, comparable, easily available data, as it would be too costly to embark on an exercise of gathering data that could only be used in the construction of such an index.

The meeting felt that the time and cost implications of data collection initiatives to support only a few indicators should always be borne in mind. An alternative approach could be to strengthen the quality and timeliness of the Surveys of Living Conditions (SLC), Labour Force Survey (LFS), Household Budgetary Survey (HBS) and Population Census. This should result in cleaner, broader datasets and improved data analysis and better quality indicators. Simply put, it would be an exercise of normal collection of good quality data.

The meeting expressed its pleasure at the use of qualitative data in building the matrices of susceptibility and sustainability, and agreed that much more qualitative research could be undertaken in the subregion to support the quantitative research. There was a suggestion that more researchers should be exposed to qualitative data collection methodologies and the use of qualitative data in the support of poverty reduction strategies and needs assessment analyses.

In addition to the major national surveys, such as the SLC, the meeting called for other methods to be put into practice, such as rapid assessment methods to arrive at sub-national or community-level data. The methods could also be linked in order to obtain disaggregated data by community. Jamaica was seen as the best-practice example, with the creation of community profiles from census data. A suggestion was made that the structure of the various available methods/surveys could be reviewed in detail in order to create better linkages and standardize the data.

In conclusion, the meeting welcomed the report on vulnerability presented by Ms. Kambon and thanked ECLAC for spearheading the work in the subregion and the introduction of vulnerability analyses into the work of the subregion should strengthen analysis of equity gaps and improve policy prescriptions.

Agenda item 3:
Gender equity and the use of gender indicators

Mrs. Lynette Joseph-Brown, Social Research Consultant, made the presentation *Gender equity and the use of gender indicators for evidence-based policy formulation*, in which she identified and described a list of Caribbean-specific gender indicators used in the creation of a database of gender indicators, implemented by the Women and Development Unit, Santiago, Chile. Reference was made to the final report submitted in December 2004. The purpose of the database was to support gender analysis in the subregion by providing governments, researchers and other stakeholders access to gender indicators for each country, and to allow comparison of these indicators with other countries in the subregion.

Mrs. Joseph-Brown outlined the importance of social and gender equity from the perspective of meeting the MDGs, and stated that gender indicators were a useful tool for policy makers to integrate and mainstream gender into policy development. While these indicators drew on sex disaggregated data and records for their construction, their usefulness went beyond this and into the realm of shedding light on social issues. That is, these statistics held the potential to highlight social issues that otherwise might have been overlooked.

The participants were given a review of the newly-created database, a description of the gender indicators and sub-indicators, and examples of tables generated from the database. The database contained a final list of 12 thematic areas divided into 63 sub-indicators for 14 member countries of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters in Port of Spain. The 14 countries represented were: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. Occasionally, when the availability of data permitted, data from the British Virgin Islands and Haiti were included. The 12 core indicators (thematic areas) used in the database were: household; population/demography; poverty; fertility; education; work; labour force participation; employed labour force; unemployed labour force; health; women's empowerment and economy. Difficulties encountered in the construction and population of the database related to, inter alia, language barriers; laws governing the release of country data; the absence of an agreed-upon framework of core indicators; absence of harmonized data; unclean datasets; absence of data for key indicators; absence of disaggregated data by key variables; methodological differences and absence of time-series data. It was noted that although ECLAC's group of indicators was a subset of the larger Caribbean Community (CARICOM) group of gender indicators, there still was no agreed-upon set of core indicators to be used for gender analysis.

The types of indicators as they relate to the construction of the database are outline: regional indicators, usually an aggregation of comparable national indicators within the subregion, were impossible to include in the database at this time given the unavailability of data and the lack of harmonization of methodologies and definitions. Therefore, the data presented are national data for the selected countries. Poverty indicators could only be obtained by analyzing existing poverty datasets presented for countries in which surveys have been undertaken and for which data collected. ECLAC Port of Spain possessed such datasets for nine countries, five of which are harmonized according to methodology and definition of variables. Three studies have been completed recently, and efforts were underway to acquire these. Some poverty indicators, however, could not be presented in the database due to problems of sample size and unrepresentative figures. Urban/rural data were difficult to locate since this had not been identified by most countries in their population and housing datasets. The small size of Caribbean countries made it difficult to define areas or communities as urban or rural. As a result, the variable 'area of residence' had been omitted from the database. Reproductive health indicators were available from several sources, but were outdated and irregular. A solution to this was the use of international and regional data sources to ensure the standardization of this indicator across countries in the database.

Data on work and income in the Caribbean were known to be inconsistent and unreliable. Raw data from the ILO were used to calculate the necessary gender indicators, where available; income data, however, were not produced for the database. Most education data were available from the population censuses, but indicators of Caribbean (il)literacy were problematic due to the irregularity of Literacy Surveys in the subregion and the unrepresentative element inherent in the data. The database therefore used United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as the source of its standardized data for indicators of literacy and illiteracy in the Caribbean. Poor data quality kept indicators on schooling out of the database. There was a proliferation of household indicators, demonstrating the vast amount of work done

in the region in this area and the need for high quality data for the production of new and relevant indicators. Demographic data and estimates/projections were also easy to locate from published sources, including the Population and Housing Censuses. Other data, such as economic indicators and women's participation in politics, were also presented in the database.

In conclusion, Mrs. Joseph-Brown stated that every attempt to construct indicators using survey data in the Caribbean was an opportunity to strengthen existing capacity in the subregion for the collection and construction of more robust indicators that could be used in gender planning and policy formulation.

After the presentation the floor was opened for discussion. The participants expressed their pleasure with the in-depth analysis that was possible from the use of gender indicators, and repeated a call for institutional support and political will in continuing work in this area. Gender indicators also provided another angle at which Caribbean data could be viewed in informing policy.

Clarification was sought regarding the definition and use of the term "economic agency". It was explained to the meeting that the inclusion of this term provided an avenue to study the scope/opportunity for women to earn money, since it was well-accepted that Caribbean women were attaining higher levels of education than men, yet still had little access to the economic goals and income-earning potential than their male counterparts. It was felt that the MDGs were limited in their scope to address problems of inequity, especially from this Caribbean gender perspective. The participants agreed that generally, the MDGs also were weak in their coverage of domestic violence, another pervasive reality of Caribbean culture that disempowered women regardless of their economic attainment or social standing. How was this being measured? Were there any proposals to this effect? An important aspect to consider was that of underreporting in gender-based violence. The meeting was informed that while there were no regional or international data on domestic violence, ECLAC had already embarked on data collection to support this indicator. On a deeper level, however, there needed to be international recognition of this indicator as an important variable to meeting those MDGs targeting gender and other inequities.

In conclusion, the meeting welcomed the findings of Mrs. Joseph-Brown's work, and the promise of what analyses from the gender indicators could yield in terms of policy formulation. Again there was a call for the political will to support initiatives towards strengthening statistical and institutional capacity at the national and subregional levels.

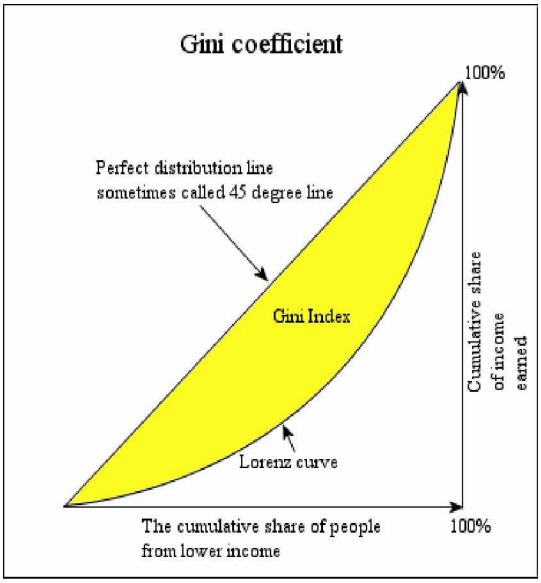
Agenda item 4:
The use of the Gini Coefficient in identifying income inequality

Dr. Ralph Henry delivered a presentation entitled, "Inequality in Caribbean SIDS: Contributing Factors and measurement", in which he brought the expertise and insights gained through the conduct of numerous poverty assessments across the region to bear on the topic.

He introduced the topic with a brief commentary on inequality in Caribbean SIDS and the contributing factors and measurement of same, the Gini Coefficient being one of the means of measurement of inequality.

He presented an overview of a selected number of equity gap measures that could be had through the survey of living conditions that are undertaken in the Caribbean. These included: poverty levels, Gini Coefficients, quintile distributions and other key indicators of consumption or expenditure. He then elaborated on the Gini Coefficient as a measure of inequality updating participants with relevant theoretical issues regarding the Gini's development and uses. He stated that in the Caribbean, data was used from the SLCs from which one was able to extract specific data on poverty levels, determine the Gini Coefficient, quintile distributions and other key indicators. He noted, however, that only Jamaica conducted surveys annually and that this country was the trailblazer in data collection and use of the data in formulating policy. For all the other countries, the surveys were conducted sporadically and, in some cases, as much as 10 years would elapse between surveys. For example, in Belize a survey was conducted in 1995 and the next in 2002. Saint Lucia was cited as one where there was a 10-year lapse between surveys.

He also observed that even without some of the relevant data collected from SLCs, the Gini Coefficient could be determined. Qualitative data could also be extracted to determine poverty levels if the quantitative data was not readily available. For example, using labour force data, the several variables which it contained could give a wealth of information on what was taking place in a society and particularly the changes over time.



Dr. Henry then defined the Gini Coefficient by demonstrating how it was derived. The Gini coefficient was named after Corrado Gini in 1912. It is used in conjunction with the Lorenz Curve, named after Max Lorenz and which was first put into use in 1905. The Gini Index is the area between the perfect distribution of income line (also known as the 45 degree line). This perfect distribution of income occurs when income is evenly distributed. The diagram below was taken from Dr. Henry's PowerPoint presentation.

One of the problems with the Gini index was identifying the point of intersection between the Lorenz Curve and the Gini curve, especially in cases of comparisons both over time and comparison among countries. It is only when there is no intersection that the distribution is closer to the

diagonal. The role of value judgement is also very important. The fact that the Gini has declined may not guarantee agreement among persons that inequality has fallen.

The inverted "U" shape of the Gini is also used as an indication of poverty levels. Over time, as a country develops, the depth of the "U" increases and inequality rises and falls with development. This theory is known as the Kuznet theory, after Simon Kuznet (1955) but there have been some inconsistencies which suggest that this measure is not as precise and therefore statisticians are wary of drawing conclusions. Sir Arthur Lewis was a believer in this theory as per his perspective of the trickle down theory of development that prompts the growth process and leads to a decrease in poverty levels. But it is argued that since there is a possibility of fluctuation, why not a "W"?

Following his theoretical discussion of the Gini he moved on to look at the contributing factors of inequality and suggested that they included: resources such as income, wealth and needs; tastes and choices, savings, risk-taking and perception of opportunity; age and life cycle and opportunity and outcome. In placing these contributing factors within the context of the Caribbean, at the present conjuncture, he highlighted the lack of diversification and dependence on a limited range of exports and a lack of mechanisms for trade adjustment in highlighting the case of Saint Lucia and Belize. He suggested that participants place these experiences in the context of the international division of labour, technological change and segmentation of labour markets. In elaborating on the position of Caribbean SIDS he presented comparative data for selected Caribbean SIDS on Human Development Index (HDI) poverty and inequality estimates.

In highlighting the importance of examining inequality through various lenses, he presented the case of Belize where, although the proportion of the population which were defined as poor had not changed significantly from the 1995 period (33.0) to the 2002 period (33.5), an examination of the data distributed by ethnicity presented a different picture. It allowed researchers and policy makers to see that the patterns of ethnic inequality were changing. Dr. Henry also presented the Gini Coefficient for Trinidad and Tobago by ethnicity for six periods in the country's modern era. He suggested that in the case of plural societies a number of considerations have to be taken into account when exploring measures to reduce inequality. He suggested: the nature of State sector and control of primary income-earning activities in the economy; the degree of ethnic segmentation of the economy; the relative rate of growth among sectors of the economy; and the efficiency and efficacy of fiscal redistribution measures.

He argued that redistribution was fundamental to addressing inequality. To do so required the redistribution of valued assets in the direction of greater equity and this was possible through creative social engineering to generate a rapid shift in the ownership patterns in the society. Technological and scientific changes could also reduce or vitiate the primacy or advantage of value of assets accumulated from an earlier period. Lastly, the constituent groups at the bottom of the social pyramid of the society may make special efforts at the group level to improve their economic and social status.

Dr, Henry concluded by reminding the meeting that inequality was a function of factors deriving from social processes and the nature of the political economy.

The floor was then open for discussion. The participants thanked Dr. Henry for what was a refreshing and unique approach to the discussion of measuring equity gaps and insightful presentation with a formidable array of supporting data.

The question of the effect of globalization on inequality was raised and more specifically, the reality of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). It was suggested that there may be more examples of negatives than positives where globalization was concerned in reducing inequality, but that much depended on the particular economy. In regard to CSME and the free movement of people within the Caribbean, the impact of reduction or increase in inequality depended on who was moving to where. Dr. Henry noted that often outsiders capitalized on opportunities that were not readily observed by locals. This was not only applicable to movement within the region, but also in movement to more developed countries. He observed that taking advantage of opportunities usually depended on the person and it was his view that Caribbean people were not adept enough yet at taking advantage of the many opportunities available. There were some exceptions, but it was not generally the norm. The reality was that many people looked for jobs as opposed to looking for possibilities.

With regard to the use of statistics, while the usual economic indicators were useful in measuring poverty, the meeting agreed that a collection of social statistics could be of more value to statisticians and policy makers. This did not mean that the Gini Coefficient should not be calculated and used, but it should be used in conjunction with other data. Dr. Henry suggested that the value added by the use of qualitative data was of immense benefit. It was also noted that Jamaica was one of the few countries that actually used both types of data, quantitative and qualitative in policy formulation.

Agenda item 5:
Presentation on the CWIQ system

Mr. Edwin St. Catherine of the Statistical Department of Saint Lucia informed the meeting that the Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) system was developed to monitor poverty and development objectives at the country level, and was based on the Rapid Assessment Programme methodology developed by the World Bank. CWIQ gauged simple indicators on access, use and level of satisfaction with key social and economic services as part of an overall monitoring package. As part of its programme it features a short questionnaire with multiple choice questions in a form which may be scanned into a computer database for ease of data compilation.

He informed the meeting that the CWIQ system came with a training manual and had a high focus on quality of results. It contained its own system for checking abnormalities in results obtained and the added advantages of being able to be deployed quickly, frequently and cheaply over large populations. He also brought to the attention of the meeting the fact that the software programme had built-in capacity to estimate the level of error that may be present in the results. Further, the software could be used to analyse problems that may have occurred with

enumerators during training so that they could be corrected before entry into the field. A brief demonstration of the programme was made, using Saint Lucia's database.

Participants expressed the view that it was a new survey methodology introduced by the World Bank in the region and many researchers were unclear about its contents or purpose and unfamiliar with its components.

During the discussion which followed it was further explained that the CWIQ was a pilot project launched in Saint Lucia through the interview process of 1,300 households that looked at the nature of problems with public institutions. The meeting was reminded by the presenter that the CWIQ was not meant to replace the SLCs, but because the cost of conducting a SLC was so high, a CWIQ could be applied in the years between the conduct of an SLC.

The meeting concluded that since consumption indicators were not present in the CWIQ, it was necessary to continue carrying out the SLCs, in countries in the Caribbean. The meeting heard that the CWIQ was generically designed on nine indicators which included several key MDG issues, therefore it could be useful in tracking the progress of countries' advancement on the MDGs.

The meeting agreed that as far as possible, there should be some sort of external validation for the results obtained via a CWIQ survey, either through population census or SLCs.

Agenda item 6:
Working groups session

The participants were divided into two groups to discuss and develop an agenda that would assist in the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of the reduction of equity gaps at the national level. Each group was invited to present their report to the meeting.

The working Groups were presented with Guidelines which were suggested as a format for their work. Three core questions were recommended for their consideration. These were as follows:

- Of the tools presented and discussed which are most useable at the national level?
- How can we enhance the tools for use at the national level?
- How can the use of these tools be strengthened both by technocrats and policy makers?

Agenda item 7:
Report of the working groups

The first group reported that the presently accepted global and economic indicators worked fairly adequately in a national setting, but that the SVI could become a useful tool with some modifications. It was felt that indicators were useful not only to assist in policy implementation, targeting and identifying areas for further research, but could in some cases be useful in bargaining with external agencies.

It was found that at the national level, all data were useful, however, all indicators have to be viewed through a cultural and contextual lens. It was recommended that greater use be made of qualitative data to accompany the quantitative data. Since statistics and data are used to inform policy, much could be gained from a more participatory approach to data collection from the targeted community.

Recommended also was the improvement of statistical literacy and the strengthening of data analysis capacity. In this context, social policy makers needed to understand and be able to analyze statistics. In the social sector it was noted that data included the use of administrative data, therefore linkages must be made between data gatherers and users by strengthening the data analysis capacity and producing more user friendly publications. It was imperative to recognise the importance of data reporting needs of international agencies and conventions to which governments were mandated to submit reports.

The working group also noted that gender was still viewed as a "woman's issue": however the scope of gender was broader than the male/female dichotomy and included issues such as class. It was recommended that data gatherers and policy makers needed training and capacity building to strengthen their data collection instruments and level of analysis. It was felt that gender indicators had a vast scope for application, however, there was still a need to improve reliability of instruments used in collecting data which could be an input to gender analysis.

The second working group observed that all the tools presented during the two-day meeting were useable at the national level, however the choice depended on the availability of resources, the time frame and the nature of the enquiry. The Gini-income inequality measure was good for attracting donor attention but it needed other supporting methods of income assessment to make it meaningful at the national level. This was so because of its academic nature. All agreed, however, that its advantage was its visual appeal and if there was more community education on the role and use of the Gini then it could become a useful tool.

In regard to other measures discussed, the groups felt that the SLC was useful to measure poverty and living conditions; the vulnerability indices could be used for long-term planning in order to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience; and the CWIQ could be more useful for measuring the MDGs because it could be tailored to track the progress and change of various issues.

In order to enhance these tools, the group recommended that they should be equipped to provide a gender analysis. A recommendation was also made for sensitisation and advocacy programmes, and training for policy makers and senior technocrats in the use of gender indicators and other indices such as the vulnerability indices.

In considering how the use of these tools could be strengthened at the technocrat and policy maker level, the group recommended a more coherent institutional mechanism at the national level in which statisticians produced data, policy analysts analysed the data and policy makers used the combined output. The group reiterated the meetings' view that qualitative research was a necessary research tool in order to provide a deeper understanding of the quantitative data obtained.

The group identified the need for public education and better techniques of data dissemination.

Following the group reports a round-table discussion ensued and it was noted that there was insufficient linkages in the region among statistical data producers, policy analysts and policy makers. It was felt that the statistician should not be called upon to fill this gap as a more effective approach to data production on the statistician's part would be the production of data more consistently and frequently.

The Jamaican approach was considered to be one of the better ones in the region, whereby statistics are collected by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN), analyzed by the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), jointly with personnel from line ministries. Together with government ministers all are involved in the final production of social policies.

In spite of its usefulness, CWIQ, in an environment that lacks capacity to manage it takes much longer than expected. Further, all agreed that social statistics tend to be produced slowly and some mechanism needs to be put in place for speedier outputs. Without current statistics, neither statisticians nor policy makers will be taken seriously.

Recommendations were made for better planning in the data collection effort through the review of the use and application of human and financial resources. It was observed that technical will was needed among statisticians and social scientists to push the political will. Therefore it was recommended that when the statistical fraternity next meet at the regional level, there should be a strong lobby for greater attention to be placed on the inclusion of social and gender indicators and the exploration of social vulnerability indices.

Agenda item 8:
Closure

Ms. Asha Kambon of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, in bringing the meeting to a close, thanked the participants for their attendance and useful contributions. She reiterated that ECLAC was committed to providing a forum in which social researchers, policy makers and statisticians could come together to better understand each other's needs and wants. Such a forum, it was suggested, could also provide an opportunity to strategise on how to increase the efficiency and use of evidence-based social policy formulation processes. She indicated that there seemed to be a consensus that, in addition to exploring the various measures that could be used to analyse the equity gaps in the subregion, this meeting also served the purpose of allowing policy makers and statisticians an opportunity to enter into dialogue.

Participants were assured that the meeting report would be widely distributed for use by both policy makers and statisticians.

The meeting was brought to a close with the participants exchanging the usual courtesies.

Annex

List of Participants

Lynette Joseph-Brown, Social Research Consultant, 23 Warner Street, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: 868-645-3876; Cell: 868-686-4920; E-Mail: lynette.josephbrown@gmail.com

Sandra Baptiste-Caruth, Programme Specialist, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN House, 3 Chancery Lane, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: 868-623-7056; Fax: 868-623-1658; E-Mail: Sandra.Baptiste.Caruth@undp.org.tt

Avril Siung-Chang, Environmental Health Advisor, Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), 49 Jerningham Avenue, Belmont, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: 868-624-7524; Fax: 868-624-5643; E-mail: changavr@trt.paho.org

Dave Clement, Assistant Director of Statistics (Ag.), Central Statistical Office, National Statistics Building, 80 Independence Square, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: 868-625-1669; Fax 868-625-3802; E-Mail: dmc2tt@yahoo.com

Arlene Daniel, Chief Welfare Officer, Ministry of Social Development, Financial Complex, Carenage, St. George's, Grenada. Tel: 473-440-7952; Fax: 473-440-7990; E-Mail: mhousing@hotmail.com

Douglas Forbes, Senior Statistician, The Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN), 7 Cecelio Avenue, Kingston 5, Jamaica. Tel: 876-926-5311; Fax: 876-926-1138; E-Mail: dforbes@statinja.com

Ingrid Charles-Gumbs, Director, Gender Affairs, Ministry of Social Development, Community and Gender Affairs, Church Street, Basseterre, St. Kitts and Nevis. Tel: 869-465-2521 Ext. 1427; Fax: Fax: 869-466-1552; E-Mail: mwaskn@caribsurf.com

Her Excellency Rosalyn E. Hazelle, Ambassador Plenipotentiary, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Government of St. Kitts and Nevis, Church Street, Basseterre, St. Kitts. Tel: 869-466-4106; Fax: 869-465-1778; E-mail: rhazelle@yahoo.com

Dr. Ralph Henry, Executive Chairman, KAIRI Consultants, 14 Cochrane Street, Tunapuna, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: 868-663-2677, Fax: 868-663-1442, E-Mail: rmhenry@wow.net

Pat Holden, Senior Social Development Adviser, Department for International Development (DFID - Caribbean), Chelsea House, Chelsea Road, Bridgetown, Barbados. Tel: 246-430-7940; Fax: 246-430-7959; E-mail: p-holden@dfid.gov.uk

Alverna Inniss, Senior Programme Officer, Ministry of Health and Social Improvement, Lower High Street, St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda. Tel: 268-462-9664; Fax: 268-462-9664; E-Mail: alvernai@hotmail.com

Monica Paul-McLean, Project Officer, UNICEF – Trinidad and Tobago, UN House, 3 Chancery Lane, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: 868-623-7056 Ext. 249; Fax: 868-623-1658; E-Mail: monica.paul.mclean@undp.org.tt

Polly Oliver, Assistant Coordinator, Gender Affairs Division, Ministry of Social Development, Co-operative, Family, Gender and Ecclesiastical Affairs, Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Tel: 784-457-2476 ; Fax: 784-457-2476; E-mail: corwoman@caribsurf.com

Tara Lisa Persaud, Gender Network Facilitator, SURF Coordination Unit, UNDP Caribbean Office, UN House, 3 Chancery Lane, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel : 868-623-7056 Ext. 254 ; Fax : 868-623-5940/1658 ; E-Mail : tara.lisa.persaud@undp.org

Ro-Anne Quashie-Harry, Population Policy Coordinator, Economic and Social Planning Unit, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development, Administrative Centre, Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Tel: 784-457-1746; Fax: 784-456-2430; E-Mail: cenplan@caribsurf.com

Audrey Michele Rodrigues, Project Officer (Education), UNICEF Guyana, 72 Brickdam, Georgetown, Guyana. Tel: 592-227-3662; Fax: 592-226-5894; E-Mail: audreymrod@yahoo.com or amrodrigues@unicef.org

Edwin St. Catherine, Director, Statistical Department, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, Chreiki Building, Micoud Street, Castries, St. Lucia. Tel: ; Fax: 758-458-1825; E-Mail: edwins@stats.gov.lc

Adanna Shallowe, Research Officer, SURF Coordination Unit, UNDP Caribbean Office, UN House, 3 Chancery Lane, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel : 868-623-7056 Ext. 254 ; Fax : 868-623-5940/1658 ; E-Mail :ashallowe@surf.undp.org.tt

Reynold Simons, Senior Specialist Employment and Labour Market Policies, International Labour Organization (ILO), 11 St Clair Avenue, Port of Spain. Tel: 868 628 1453; Fax: 868 628 2433; Email: simons@ilocarib.org.tt

Elizabeth Arnold-Talbert, Deputy Chief Statistician, Central Statistical Office, Ministry of Budget Management, Ministry of Finance Building, Belmopan, Belize. Tel: 501-822-2207; Fax: 501-822-3206; E-Mail: bettytalbert@yahoo.com

Lilian Reneau-Vernon, Representative, Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), 49 Jerningham Avenue, Belmont, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: 868-624-7524; Fax: 868-624-5643; E-mail:

Cypreanna Winters, Statistician, Department of Statistics, National Statistical Office, P.O. Box N-3904, Nassau, Bahamas. Tel: 242-302-2414; Fax: 242-325-5149; E-Mail: CypreannaWinters@bahamas.gov.bs or cypwin@yahoo.com

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Rudolf Buitelaar, Deputy Director. Tel: 868-623-5595 Ext. 2316; Fax: 868-623-8485; Email: Rudolf.BUITELAAR@Cepal.org

Asha Kambon, Social Affairs Officer. Tel: 868-623-5595 Ext. 2221; Fax: 868-623-8485; Email: Asha.KAMBON@cepal.org

Helen McBain, Economic Affairs Officer. Tel: 868-623-5595 Ext. 2305; Fax: 868-623-8485; E-Mail: Helen.MCBAIN@cepal.org

Oliver Paddison, Associate Economic Affairs Officer. Tel: 868-623-5595 Ext. 2311; Fax: 868-623-8485; E-Mail: Oliver.PADDISON@cepal.org

Gaietry Pargass, Social Affairs Officer. Tel: 868-623-5595 Ext. 2222; Fax: 868-623-8485; Email: Gaietry.PARGASS@cepal.org