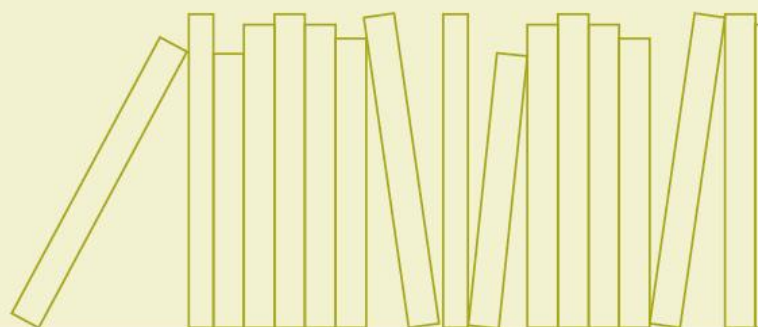


Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
**ECLAC SUBREGIONAL HEADQUARTERS
FOR THE CARIBBEAN**



Report of the expert group meeting on measuring the digital society to advance digital inclusion in the Caribbean



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Working for
a productive, inclusive
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**Caribbean
Telecommunications
Union**



UNITED NATIONS



Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean

Expert group meeting on measuring the digital society
to advance digital inclusion in the Caribbean

Virtual meeting, 18 September 2023

LIMITED
LC/CAR/2023/21
22 December 2023
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

**REPORT OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON MEASURING
THE DIGITAL SOCIETY TO ADVANCE DIGITAL INCLUSION
IN THE CARIBBEAN**

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. Place and date

1. The Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC) subregional headquarters for the Caribbean, in collaboration with the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) convened a virtual expert group meeting entitled “Measuring the digital society to advance digital inclusion in the Caribbean” on 18 September 2023. The programme is available in annex II of this report.

2. Attendance¹

2. Representatives from five member States: Belize, Dominica, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago and one associate member: Turks and Caicos Islands attended the meeting. Also in attendance were representatives from: Public Utilities Commission of Anguilla (PUC-Anguilla), Telecommunications Authority of Suriname (TAS), Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT) and Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of the British Virgin Islands. In total, 18 participants attended the workshop, 11 of whom were female. The list of participants is available in annex I of this report.

3. Meeting agenda

1. Welcome and opening of the meeting
2. Presentation of study: “Measuring the digital society to advance digital inclusion in the Caribbean”
3. Open discussion on methodology
4. Presentation of comments by invited experts
5. Open discussion
6. Closing remarks and vote of thanks

4. Objective

3. The overall objective of the expert group meeting was to review the findings of the draft study entitled “Measuring the digital society to advance digital inclusion in the Caribbean”, by presenting an overview of the study and its methodology and inviting feedback from experts, including Caribbean policymakers and regulators during the discussion. This meeting follows on from deliberations of the previous workshop jointly organized by ECLAC and CTU, on 27 and 28 March 2023, which initiated discussions regarding digital society measurement in the Caribbean subregion.

B. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

1. Opening of the meeting

4. Participants were welcomed by the moderator of the meeting, the Senior Programme Management Assistant of the Caribbean Knowledge Management Centre (CKMC) at ECLAC subregional headquarters

¹ See annex I for a full list of participants.

for the Caribbean. He then invited the Deputy Director of the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean to deliver opening remarks on behalf of the Director.

5. The Deputy Director welcomed and thanked participants for joining this expert group meeting to review the study “Measuring the digital society to advance digital inclusion in the Caribbean”. He noted that the study was motivated by previous work conducted on digital inclusion, which highlighted the importance of identifying digital inclusion metrics suitable to the Caribbean. He noted that the aim of the study was to provide further insight and information to advance the discussion on measurement of the digital society and digital inclusion. The Deputy Director thanked the attendees for their participation in the research through their response to the survey and expressed hope that the research results would guide policymakers and result in the development of information and communications technology (ICT) indicators to measure the digital society and digital inclusion. He noted that the meeting was an opportunity for participants to provide feedback on the study and invited them also to submit written comments.

6. The Deputy Secretary-General and Head of Regional Policy Development, CTU, in delivering his welcome remarks, stated that CTU has been working on the harmonization of ICT policy among its membership and has recognized a data deficit. In referring to the vision and roadmap for CARICOM Single ICT Space, he recalled that initial assessments to enable implementation were only undertaken in 2023, due to resource constraints, and that the results are now expected in 2024. In this regard, he highlighted the importance of identifying priority areas and suitable metrics. Further, he stated that CTU had received calls at the ministerial level for an ICT indicator dashboard to monitor developments in the region. He affirmed that this context provided the occasion for partnership with ECLAC, since they were also conducting research on ICT indicators. In this regard, he acknowledged the previous collaboration with ECLAC to jointly host a workshop to identify these measurement metrics in general and as they relate to digital inclusion. The study being reviewed evaluated data availability for identifying such metrics. In closing, he reiterated the Caribbean Telecommunications Union’s commitment to sustaining mutually beneficial partnerships.

2. Presentation of study: “Measuring the digital society to advance digital inclusion in the Caribbean”

7. In delivering part one of the first presentation, the Associate Programme Management Officer, CKMC, provided the context for the study, which included the outcome of past workshops held individually and collaboratively by ECLAC and CTU, between 2022 and 2023. She noted that the objective of the workshop held in March 2023 was to develop “a prioritized list of ICT indicators suited to measure levels of digital inclusion”, which would support the formation of evidence-based policy and augment decision-making. The workshop also sought to establish ICT data collection focal points for countries and territories in the subregion. A draft list of 10 priority areas for measurement resulted from the workshop. The Associate Programme Management Officer identified the objective of the study as being the provision of “data and information to support and advance the discussions on measurement of the Caribbean digital society bearing in mind the need for digital inclusion”. She informed that from the draft list of priority areas for measurement, some of which included proposed sub-areas, a list of 74 indicators were elaborated, data for which were then analysed for their availability and recency in international databases. Additionally, a survey was jointly conducted by ECLAC and CTU to facilitate the identification of measurement priorities by Caribbean governments and regulators, including the strengths and limitations of measurement systems, as well as any needs for capacity-building.

8. The Associate Programme Management Officer then reviewed the methodology. Indicators were identified in international databases such as from the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The availability and recency of data was considered for

all 29 countries and territories under the remit of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC). The median availability per indicator was calculated and summarized per priority area. She noted large variances in the availability and recency of data among the countries and territories.

9. During the second part of the presentation, the Programme Management Officer of CKMC noted that during the period 6 to 26 June 2023, experts from 15 CDCC members and associate members submitted responses. He noted that the survey collected views, recommendations, and suggestions from national and regional stakeholders on current approaches to the measurement of ICT indicators. Feedback on current measurement systems were also compiled through the survey, to ascertain strengths, weaknesses and capacity-building needs. He noted that the main respondents to the survey were senior government decision makers (permanent secretaries and directors), from ministries with responsibility for ICT, as well as senior level representatives from ICT and telecommunications regulators and organizations in the subregion. Overall, regarding the two categories of respondents, there were submissions from approximately 61% of surveyed governments and around 22% of surveyed regulators in the Caribbean subregion.

10. The Programme Management Officer noted that the survey responses constituted a small sample size, given the number of single-country responses, and that the findings should be considered as indicative and not necessarily confirmatory of the attitudes and specific perceptions of countries associated with the study. Responses were received from experts from 15 countries and territories, namely Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cuba, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turks and Caicos Islands. He then presented the preliminary analysis, which showed the following ranking of the top five priority areas for measurement identified by the respondents: (i) cybersecurity, (ii) affordability, (iii) digital economy, (iv) governance, and (v) digital skills.

11. In respect of the frequency analysis, the findings placed priority on connectivity for governments and inclusivity for regulators. These two priorities were not among the top five listings. While inclusivity was not seen as a priority for two respondents, most agreed that the contents of the entire draft list were to be considered major priorities.

12. An examination of the current measurement systems followed, when examples of strengths and weaknesses were provided for each country and territory. The findings revealed that most countries had systems for collecting and analysing ICT indicators, the digital society and inclusion. Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands shared the strengths of having multiple data sources, while Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Jamaica and Turks and Caicos Islands shared the strength of having at least one mandated entity collecting data. Montserrat and Saint Lucia shared the strength of having fully implemented systems, while Saint Kitts and Nevis and Suriname shared the strength of having electronic data collection. Dominica's strength was listed as having more than four entities collecting data, while the strength reported by Trinidad and Tobago was having a comprehensive framework for measurement.

13. Regarding weaknesses, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, the British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica and Suriname, all reported that their systems were not fully implemented. Anguilla, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago and Turks and Caicos Islands shared weaknesses such as manual data collection, frequency of data collection, insufficient ICT indicators, trust issues, time consuming processes and lack of legislative framework, respectively. Reference was also made to the digital inclusion survey of the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. In this regard, one expert noted that the limited sample size and time-consuming data collection process were viewed as weaknesses in the current measurement systems.

14. The Programme Management Officer summarized some key challenges for the countries and territories: resource constraints, coordination challenges and issues related to data compliance, and trust

and timeliness. Trust and timeliness were seen as impediments to data quality and also affected the policy making and regulatory decision-making to support the development of the digital society. Noteworthy strengths were diverse data sources, and data collection accuracy and robust analysis. He also took note that for challenges per priority area, recording and measuring sustainability were seen as the most challenging by most respondents, while affordability, connectivity, and usage and local content were found the least challenging priority areas.

15. The importance of disaggregating data by demographic and geographic characteristics was noted. He underscored the value of such disaggregated data as being critical to addressing digital inclusion since they can help to identify gaps and reveal the presence of inequities. They can also help to identify persons and communities that are underserved. The following top five priorities for each group were identified by the respondents:

| Demographic characteristics | Geographic characteristics |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Gender | 1. Urban/rural/remote, |
| 2. Age | 2. Population density, |
| 3. Income level | 3. District/country/parish, |
| 4. Disability | 4. Multiple islands (...) |
| 5. Ethnicity | 5. Coastal/interior |

16. As regards capacity-building needs, assistance with the identification of areas for data collection and data collection instruments were noted at the national level. Theoretical training programmes were identified as being of highest priority for institutions. The presentation concluded that countries should focus on high priority areas that were not seen as challenging to implement. Examples of such low hanging fruit were affordability and connectivity. Further research will need to be done for such priority areas as digital skills, cybersecurity and trust, governance and digital economy, all of which were identified as challenging.

3. Open discussion on methodology

17. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT) expressed the view that it was incorrect to state that the size of the survey sample for its country's digital inclusion survey was limited, given that it followed the methodology of the Central Statistical Office (CSO). The CEO also observed the report's reference to indigenous languages and questioned whether this was very relevant in the Caribbean context.

18. Other feedback received on methodology included such items as survey design, ease of navigation and the limited range of options to select from. This, for example, hindered the ability of some participants to complete the survey, as the available options did not allow for accurate recording of national reality.

19. The Associate Programme Officer provided a clarification regarding the term "tablet-based data collection", on which a query had been raised, signalling that it referred to survey data being gathered and submitted via electronic tablets. She expressed appreciation to participants for their feedback and advised that the revised report would reflect their contribution.

4. Presentation of comments by invited experts

20. The invited expert commented on the limitation of the data available from the survey, observing that the responses received should have been augmented by the inclusion of experts from national statistical offices among the respondents. He underscored the importance of partnership between NSOs and telecommunications regulators. The expert also expressed agreement with the earlier comments regarding

the sample size of the National Digital Inclusion Survey for Trinidad and Tobago. He also advanced the importance of creating key performance indicators for the Caribbean subregion.

5. Open discussion

21. The Programme Management Officer thanked the ECLAC consultant and all participants for their observations and stated all feedback received would be taken into consideration in revising the study. He invited the submission of further comments to strengthen the study. The officer reminded all that the principal objective of the study was to support policymaking within the subregion.

22. The representative of the Ministry of Science, Energy, Technology and Transportation of Jamaica recommended that ECLAC and CTU collaborate to establish multilayered capacity-building frameworks for data collection in the Caribbean subregion. The invited expert supported this recommendation and suggested that this may need to be supported by a government policy directive or mandate. As regards the differences identified in the priorities of the governments as against those of regulators, these being issues of connectivity versus inclusivity, the invited expert signalled that these findings were significant. He further advised that metrics for digital inclusion should be carefully identified and not be confused with “digital divide or access-based metrics”. He further expressed surprise at the finding that reporting on governance was seen as challenging and noted that there may be a need for clarification on measuring governance.

23. The Associate Programme Management Officer clarified that the priority areas remained the same from the workshop, and that there were suggestions regarding sub-areas, with reference to selected international databases, including the ITU DataHub. For example, during the workshop, four sub-areas of governance were identified, namely ICT regulatory agencies, gender equity, markets and competition and human rights agencies. She concurred with the feedback from the representative of the Ministry of Science, Energy, Technology and Transportation of Jamaica that ECLAC and CTU should collaborate on creating data collection capacity-building frameworks and added that the research also revealed that there were challenges in fully implemented systems.

6. Closing remarks and vote of thanks

24. In concluding the meeting, the Programme Management Officer of CKMC thanked all the participants for their attendance, review of the study and for their provision of feedback. He also expressed his gratitude for their participation in the workshop that was held in March and for completing the survey. He reminded them that all feedback was due by the following Friday to allow for incorporation in the final publication.

25. The critical need for capacity-building in the areas of data collection, survey design and data collection instruments was also reiterated. He further noted that other training programmes towards the development of digital society would be considered for future workshops. He expressed appreciation to the CTU and ECLAC teams for their collaboration, and to the panel of experts for their participation.

Annex I**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS****A. Member States****BELIZE**

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Annex II**PROGRAMME**Monday 18 September 2023

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| 10–10.20 a.m. | <p>Welcome and opening of meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rossano Thompson, Senior Programme Management Assistant, Caribbean Knowledge Management Centre (CKMC), ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean • Welcome remarks by Dillon Alleyne, Deputy Director, ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean • Welcome remarks by Nigel Cassimire, Deputy Secretary-General and Head of Regional Policy Development, Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) |
| 10.20–10.50a.m. | <p>Presentation of study: “Measuring the digital society to advance digital inclusion in the Caribbean”</p> <p><u>Facilitators:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dale Alexander, Programme Management Officer, CKMC, ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean; and • Lika Døhl Diouf, Associate Programme Management Officer, CKMC, ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean |
| 10.50–11a.m. | <p>Open discussion on methodology</p> <p><u>Facilitator:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lika Døhl Diouf, Associate Programme Management Officer, CKMC, ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean |
| 11–11.05a.m. | Break |
| 11.05– 1.30a.m. | Presentation of comments by invited experts |
| 11.30–11.55a.m. | <p>Open discussion</p> <p><u>Facilitator:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dale Alexander, Programme Management Officer, CKMC, ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean |
| 11.55a.m.–12 (noon) | <p>Closing remarks and vote of thanks</p> <p>Dale Alexander, Programme Management Officer, CKMC, ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean</p> |



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