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for sustainable statistical capacity development
in the Caribbean
26-27 April 2012
Port of Spain

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**REPORT OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING TO DEVELOP AN
ACTION PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE STATISTICAL CAPACITY
DEVELOPMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN**

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CONTENTS

A. DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	1
B. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK.....	1
1. Place and date of the session.....	1
2. Attendance	1
3. Agenda.....	1
C. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS.....	2
1. Opening of the meeting.....	2
2. Adoption of the agenda and introduction of participants.....	2
3. Background and objectives	2
4. Prevailing challenges and needs to be addressed in order to foster sustainable statistical capacity development	3
5a. Recent, existing and planned programmes, measures and interventions to foster sustainable statistical capacity development	5
5b. Recent, existing and planned programmes, measures and interventions to foster sustainable statistical capacity development	8
6. Drafting of an action plan for sustainable statistical capacity development	10
7. Group discussions, presentations and recommendations	11
8. Conclusions and recommendations.....	11
Annex 1 List of participants.....	12

A. DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The following decisions and recommendations were accepted:
 - (a) The matrix of results and indicators would be refined by the representative from CARICOM Secretariat and the consultant provided by CIDA for RBM support.
 - (b) The CARICOM Secretariat would undertake the establishment of an online forum where the matrix and other aspects of the proposal development would be posted;
 - (c) A core group comprising representatives of the CARICOM Secretariat (lead), ECLAC, the Directors of Statistics from Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica and the representatives of ILO and UNDP in Barbados, was recommended to draft the report, post the development of the Matrix of Results and other key inputs of the proposal. Support with this process would be provided by the consultant provided by CIDA.
 - (d) A draft proposal would be submitted to the international donor CIDA for consideration and approval.

B. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. Place and date of the session

2. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean convened a two-day expert group meeting in Port of Spain on 26-27 April 2012.

2. Attendance

3. Representatives of five member States of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) attended the meeting: Belize, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.
4. Representatives of the following development partners and regional agencies were represented: Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).
5. Representatives of the following United Nations funds and agencies were represented: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).
6. Representatives of the following specialized agencies of the United Nations attended the meeting: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and International Labour Organization (ILO).
7. A representative of the following institution attended the meeting: The University of Technology, based in Jamaica.

3. Agenda

8. The meeting adopted the following agenda:
 1. Opening of the meeting
 2. Adoption of the agenda and introduction of participants
 3. Background and objectives
 4. Prevailing challenges and needs to be addressed in order to foster sustainable statistical development

5. Recent, existing and planned programmes, measures and interventions to foster sustainable statistical capacity development
6. Drafting of an action plan for sustainable statistical capacity development
7. Group discussions, presentations and recommendations
8. Conclusions and recommendations

C. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

1. Opening of the meeting

9. Welcome and opening remarks were delivered by Diane Quarless, Director, ECLAC Subregional headquarters for the Caribbean. She emphasised the importance of reliable statistical data as an essential underpinning for good evidence-based policy decision-making, and noted that its absence would inevitably increase the likelihood of poor governance and flawed business and investment decisions, among other things. She further stated that building robust statistical infrastructure at the national level, was an integral element of strategic development planning and management. She identified some of the challenges to sustainable statistical capacity in the Caribbean and noted the critical importance of investing financial, human and technical resources. She concluded by welcoming the partnership between ECLAC and CARICOM in convening this forum, as it signalled an opportunity to leverage the collective resources of the region and chart a plan of action that would assure the development of mechanisms for the collection, storage, retrieval and use of robust statistical data in the Caribbean.

2. Adoption of the agenda and introduction of participants

10. The provisional agenda was adopted.

3. Background and objectives

11. This agenda item featured presentations by the representatives of CARICOM and ECLAC on the main objectives and expected outcomes of the meeting.

12. The Coordinator, Statistics Unit, ECLAC Subregional headquarters for the Caribbean introduced the meeting and provided the context for its convening. He drew attention to the core principles of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics which are the main framework governing international statistics. He highlighted the main achievements of statistical offices and agencies in the subregion with regard to the production of statistics and noted the key organisations that have supported the work of National Statistical Systems (NSS) in the subregion. Notwithstanding those achievements, he recognized the challenges that still confronted data producers in the Caribbean subregion and against that backdrop, outlined the purpose of the forum for identifying the priority areas to enable accessibility and availability of statistics and drafting a plan of action for the subregion.

13. The Project Director of CARICOM Secretariat welcomed the opportunity that the meeting presented for collaboration with ECLAC, and conveyed the commitment of the Secretariat and the Secretary General of CARICOM in accomplishing substantive and sustainable improvements in the production of statistics. She acknowledged the issues of the lack of coordination in the region but pointed out the steps taken to address them. She recognized the support that had been received from the donor community to mitigate some of the constraints faced by the region, and highlighted the progress made by some statistical offices with their modernization trust. She however stressed the need for greater investment in statistics by Governments as a means for ensuring the sustainability of the activities and referred to the inclusion of statistics in the outcome document of the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF4) held in Busan, South Korea in late 2011. She concluded by underscoring the value

of an overarching vision for the region with respect to statistics which could be featured in the deliberations of the meeting.

4. Prevailing challenges and needs to be addressed in order to foster sustainable statistical development

15. This agenda item reviewed the current position of national statistical offices and institutes in the region, with a view to identifying their existing challenges and needs.

16. In his presentation, the representative of the Statistical Institute Belize provided a comprehensive account of the operational and core activities of the Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB). He highlighted the achievements of the statistical institute since its establishment as an independent entity in 2007, some of which included: improvements in statistical coordination, preparation of a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS), development of a Geographical Information System (GIS) within the SIB, completion of main activities of the population and housing census including preliminary tables, updating of the basket of goods for the consumer price index. Notwithstanding those achievements, he noted that there were still numerous challenges which were impediments to the work of the institute and identified the following as main areas: limited financial resources for the completion of activities, lack of spatial data for small geographic areas (e.g. villages), challenges with updating the household and business sample frames and challenges with ensuring the regular maintenance of SIB website. He presented a number of proposals for mitigating those challenges.

17. The representative of the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) provided an overview of the structure and history of STATIN. She pointed out the achievements of the institution and reported on its ability to continue to play a critical function as a data producer and prime source of data despite its reduced budget. She highlighted in particular the main statistical products in economic and social statistics, the availability of an electronic up-to-date GIS database within the office and the positive image of STATIN holds in the local media as a first stop for data. She acknowledged that STATIN, like other statistical offices, faced some challenges that ranged from institutional issues to operational challenges and identified the limitations of the Statistical Act as one sore point. She concluded with a presentation of the action plan which would address the address the prevailing challenges. Some of proposals included: amending the Statistical Act, encouraging greater collaboration and harmonization across agencies, obtaining more specialist support to develop/ exploit existing resources and conducting user needs surveys to get an assessment of the needs and gaps.

18. The representative of Central Statistical Office (CSO) in Saint Lucia expounded on the five main areas for statistical development namely: management of the CSO and National Statistical System (NSS), national accounts and trade, cartography, ICT, sampling and sampling frames; demographic statistics and population projections; and household surveys, social and environmental statistics. She noted the continued collaboration between the CSO and Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) on the development of a subregional plan for statistical capacity building, the conduct of the 2010 population and housing census and Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS4) as some achievement. She outlined areas for further support, including assistance with data dissemination tools/software, training on population projections, compiling of environmental statistics and funding for completion of International Comparison Programme (ICP). In terms of future activities, she identified plans to update the Supply and Use Tables (SUT), completion of the ICP process as some areas of priority.

19. The representative of the General Bureau of Statistics (GBS) in Suriname provided an outline of the theoretical construct of statistical capacity and then reflected on the work that had been done by CARICOM through the Regional Statistical Work Programme (RSWP). He listed some of the main challenges of the GBS which for the most part bore strong similarity to those presented by the other

member states. In addition he identified the lack of conformity with international recommendations, high non-response to business surveys, the current social economic climate and historical events as issues that impacted on the operations of the GBS. He outlined the proposal for improving the GBS and highlighted the following as key priorities: forging closer ties with national and international partners, increasing the involvement of the GBS in the regional statistics programme coordinated by CARICOM, improving legal framework and promoting sound use of statistics for policy formulation. He concluded by underscoring the importance of technical cooperation within and between countries as an essential element for ensuring the success of the NSS.

20. The representative of CSO in Trinidad and Tobago updated the meeting on the ongoing transformation exercise within the CSO. He noted the lack of autonomy as the source of the problems that have plagued the office in the past. Notwithstanding that, he noted that the CSO continued to record some key achievements in various aspects of its operations, such as, the convening of stakeholder seminars on economic statistics, national accounts, social and agriculture statistics; completion of the MICS4, and participation in International Household Survey Network (IHSN) workshop survey on documentation of meta data. With respect to challenges he identified delays with recruitment of staff, the outdated legal framework, poor physical accommodation and the management structure as the main issues of concern.

21. The Chief, Statistics Division, ECLAC Headquarters noted the threads of similarity between the experiences and challenges of national statistical offices in the subregion and observed that the presentations gave good insight on the activities that need to be addressed in the draft plan of action. Given that limited resources and inadequate regulation/ legislation stood out as recurring issues for most offices, he urged participants to start examining ways of addressing those challenges. He acknowledged the impact of the crime rate and lack of confidence in government on statistical activities as key challenges across the region and pointed out the need to consider ways of mitigating such impacts. In that regard, he suggested that countries should explore the use of administrative records as a source of statistical information and thus an option for increasing the production of statistical outputs.

22. The Adviser of the CARICOM Secretariat commended the presenters on their presentations which had sparked strong interest and informal discussions among the meeting participants. He reflected on the common issues of crime and violence, governance and standards that stood out as issues of concern. With respect to the latter, he questioned the feasibility of developing a common set of standards that could be used at a subregional level. On the issue of capacity development, he acknowledged the issue of high staff turnover which presents a problem to many member States and proposed the use of a system through which the more advanced member States could provide technical support to less developed countries with building their statistical capacity. He made reference to the stakeholder consultations and user needs survey which was conducted by the CSO of Trinidad and Tobago as best practices. He emphasised the role of the private sector as a main user and producer of data and noted the need to assess what their data needs are and ways of addressing the issues.

23. The Project Director of the CARICOM Secretariat joined her colleague in commending the presenters. She underscored the issue of governance which she emphasised was of great importance at all levels. She stated the need for member States to give more attention to developing their master plans and national strategies for statistics and further emphasised the importance of national discussions with stakeholders in that process. In that regard, she updated the meeting on the ongoing activities in the region and the progress achieved thus far. Particular reference was made to the NSDS consultation which concluded in Grenada just prior to this expert group meeting. On the issue of management, she noted that technical management as well as the management of people and processes were all critical aspects of the operations of statistical offices. She made reference to a European-Union funded workshop on the management of statistical offices that focused more so on the human resources aspect which had been

conducted in the region and highlighted, as best practices, those statistical offices that continued to deliver various statistical products despite their limited resources.

24. With regard to the topic of harmonization, the Project Director of the CARICOM Secretariat noted that this matter required further discussion as it was an issue of importance both nationally and regionally. She noted the challenges of the lack of harmonization that still existed in some countries with different agencies and departments using different baselines. At the subregional level, she pointed out the progress made in two main areas: (i) with the harmonization of labour force surveys through an initiative spearheaded by the ILO, and (ii) with the documentation of metadata i.e. use of the IHSN toolkit. In addition, she noted the vital importance of south-south cooperation and observed that while funding has been an issue, it is still a mechanism that is used widely in the region. She cited two recent undertakings, namely, the workshop on sampling which was conducted with support from ECLAC headquarters, and the work done on business registers in Grenada with support from a staff member of the Trinidad and Tobago office, (both funded by the EU) as examples of such cooperation. She noted the need for a databank of experts such as the Skills Bank currently maintained by ECLAC as a tool for housing information on the current expertise in the region, and in particular underscored the importance of this facility at a time when many of the experienced statisticians in the region were due for retirement. She emphasised the importance of building partnerships both with technical institutions and the private sector as a mechanism for addressing the priorities of the region.

25. With regard to the proposal made by the representative of Trinidad and Tobago on the implementation of a two-track path career system, the representative of Belize questioned the practicality of implementing such a proposal, especially in instances when staff members are averse to taking up managerial positions. He noted that irrespective of the level of responsibilities, remuneration should be the same for staff at the same level. He further observed the risk that an organization could take by appointing an individual who is not prepared for management responsibility to such a post. He noted that senior staff should not be forced into taking up a position just for a remuneration package and suggested that staff should be able to follow their preferred career path without missing out on the financial benefit.

26. The Director of ECLAC Subregional headquarters for the Caribbean expressed her desire to have further discussions on the issue of harmonization. She noted the frustrations expressed by the representatives of the statistical offices with certain aspects of their work especially the fragmentation of national statistical systems. She highlighted the urgent need to examine ways of strengthening and improving the effectiveness of the existing systems, through implementation of programmes to make work more efficient and improve the use of available technology including software and GIS.

5a. Recent, existing and planned programmes, measures and interventions to foster sustainable statistical capacity development

27. This session considered the recent, existing and planned programmes, measures and intervention to foster sustainable statistical capacity development as presented by the representatives of regional and international organizations.

28. The representative of FAO outlined the myriad of challenges that emanated from the global economic, food and other crises, and which consequently provided an opportunity for his office to assist in capacity building in food security statistical data management, information generation and knowledge management for articulating policy, strategic options and advice. He noted the ongoing efforts and priorities for working with statistics in the Caribbean in the areas of data management and knowledge generation, capacity building, economic and social development and statistics. He elaborated on the Global Strategy to improve agricultural and Rural Statistics (GSIARA), which is a partnership effort to

strengthen agricultural statistics and provided an overview of the steps needed to implement this initiative in the region.

29. The representative of the University of Technology presented an assessment of the situation in the education sector as viewed by her institution. She noted several areas of concern for the region with respect to the role of institutions of higher learning and underscored, in particular, the continuing interest in statistics to aid in institutional management and as a mechanism for resource allocation and/or government monitoring. She examined the strengths and weaknesses of the present education system and reiterated the issues of a lack of common standards to ensure data quality and uniformity of methodology, poor coordination of the statistical information systems at the national and regional levels, inadequate integration of data management and reporting systems across agencies, and resource and capacity constraints. She noted some of the initiatives for statistical capacity development at the university including the establishment of an Institutional Research Unit which had enhanced foster a data-driven and fact-based decision making culture and inform policies and develop guidelines. She concluded by outlining a few recommendations for the way forward.

30. The presentation by the representative of ILO presented on the technical cooperation activities on labour market information/statistics of the ILO Decent Work Team and Office in the Caribbean for the period 2010 to 2013. He noted that the current economic/employment challenges had necessitated an increased demand for ILO's work on labour market statistics. He outlined the key areas of work of ILO spanned several areas and highlighted the statistics-related aspects of the office's work which included providing technical support on surveys (labour force, wage surveys, vacancy surveys), compiling statistics from labour administrative records, labour productivity, employment projections and dissemination of labour market information. He identified funding and the inadequacy of the existing statistical strategies as the two main challenges. In relation to those challenges he outlined some recommendations, chief among them being the need to identify and resolve the existing structural challenges and adopt a formalised programme for labour statistics which incorporates both surveys and the use administrative records in every country.

31. In his presentation the Coordinator, Statistics Unit, ECLAC Subregional headquarters for the Caribbean reported on the activities being undertaken by the office in the field of statistics. Some of the areas of focus included strengthening capacity to compile Millennium Development Goal (MDG) indicators, generating poverty indicators from household surveys and compiling gender, mortality and environmental indicators. He noted the various activities that had been done to address some of the challenges in the region, such as, the coordination of a Caribbean MDG report, conduct of national and regional workshops on methodologies and metadata documentation, as well as, the implementation of a project to increase capacity to conduct informal sector surveys. He also listed some of the aspects of the work done by the office including recurrent publications, yearbooks, databases and capacity building workshops.

32. The Project Director of the CARICOM Secretariat presented on the programmes implemented by the CARICOM Secretariat to strengthen statistical capacity in CARICOM countries. She examined the role of statistics in the CARICOM Single Market and the Economy (CSME) and made reference to the various articles underpinning the mandate of the Secretariat with regard to the provision of information for the realisation of the objectives of the CSME. She outlined the structure, components and objectives of the Regional Statistical System which included a Regional Statistics Unit, the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS), and the CARICOM Advisory Group on Statistics, the Technical Working Groups and Common Regional Statistical Work Programme (RSWP). With regard to statistical capacity building, she pointed out the core elements of the approach of the Secretariat in ensuring a regional coordinated approach to the implementation of activities. She highlighted key statistical activities and initiatives of the CARICOM Secretariat which included implementation of a number of projects and

capacity building activities/training through collaboration with key development partners, such as, the European Union, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank, the World Bank, and the United Nations agencies.

Discussions

33. In response to a request from the representative of Belize for more information on the vacancy surveys and the experience of countries that utilised them, the representative of the ILO stated that there had been an increase on the demand side for the vacancy surveys because the interest of some countries in making projections on occupational aspects. He noted that vacancy surveys were typically small surveys that entailed the completion of a job opening survey to obtain information on the jobs are not being filled. On the basis of the data collected, ILO would prepare a profile of the country. Countries were at liberty to share the information if they desirous of doing so.

34. With regard to a query raised by the representative of Jamaica on the certificate course in statistics offered to public servants by UTECH, the representative of the institution informed the meeting of the organizational and structural changes that took place over the past year which resulted in the establishment of an academy for the purpose of providing customised courses. In addition, she pointed out that UTECH would be offering a distance learning programme.

35. The Economic Affairs Officer, ECLAC Subregional headquarters of the Caribbean observed that there had been significant focus on economic and trade data and not much focus on environmental data in the region. In response, the representative of the CARICOM Secretariat indicated that some work had been done and is still ongoing with respect to the collection of environmental data but there were still significant data gaps in this area. As a result, some actions had been taken to try to bridge those gaps. The representative of Trinidad and Tobago informed the meeting of a second volume of environmental data (data to 2008) had been prepared by his office but had not been published as it was still being edited.

36. The representative of STATIN indicated that one member of staff had been assigned specific responsibility for collection of environmental statistics. She further stated that STATIN has been producing environmental statistics on an annual basis and was now in the process of working with the National Environment Planning Agency (NEPA) on the compilation of the state of the environment report.

37. With regard to energy statistics, the Sustainable Development Officer, ECLAC, alerted the meeting to a previous initiative that had resulted in the production of a compendium of energy statistics in Trinidad and Tobago. Following from that experience, it was suggested that research can be carried with regards to the private sector model of data collection and publication. In response, the representative of CSO of Trinidad and Tobago indicated that his office could investigate to determine how the data was collected, although it was possible the some of the data may have been sourced from the CSO.

38. The representative of Saint Lucia commended ECLAC on the technical assistance provided through the conduct of disaster assessments using the Damage and Loss Assessment (DALA) methodology and noted the support provided following the hurricane in 2010. She further underscored that the value of such information can only be derived by making the report available to the public.

39. Participants expressed different views on the mediums for providing training. The representative of UNDP (Trinidad and Tobago) noted that the United Nations used the e-learning environment for administering a number of courses and suggested that it could be one option that universities could explore for providing training in statistics. This suggestion was endorsed by some participants because of its inherent sustainability. The representative of Saint Lucia stated that given the nature of the subject

matter, statistics courses were probably best administered in a classroom environment rather than online. The representatives of CARICOM and UNDP observed that a blended approach of online and face-to-face learning may also be explored with benefits given the availability of current information technologies.

40. The representative of ECLAC noted that online surveys provide a rich source of qualitative information that may be able to be utilised. In response, the representative of STATIN spoke about her experience with online surveys which had a disastrous outcome because no one responded. She stated that a user-needs assessment was administered online but that no one accessed the online survey, thus the institute had to resort to administering a face-to-face survey. She noted even face-to-face surveys are problematic because of the low response rate.

41. The representative of UNDP/SPARC stated that monitoring what the region has done would have been useful to gauge how the work is impacting the people on the ground. She stated that there was a need for monitoring and evaluation in all work to ensure results could be noted. The representative added that there is also the need for integrated approaches to collection, analysis and use of statistics and for enhanced information sharing and exchange amongst agencies and countries.

5b. Recent, existing and planned programmes, measures and interventions to foster sustainable statistical capacity development

42. The Resident Coordinator of UNDP (Trinidad and Tobago) highlighted two key statistical products which were the results of initiatives undertaken in Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. These activities were meant to illustrate the extent of analysis that could be conducted on nationally produced data and were part of efforts to work with partners, encourage analysis and evaluation, and promote use of the data. The initiative conducted in Suriname was done jointly with the General Bureau Statistics (GBS) and involved the conduct of a poverty measurement survey. In Trinidad and Tobago, UNDP partnered with the CSO in designing a human development atlas. Through this project, the CSO was household surveys, such as MICS, HBS, vital statistics and SLC to generate maps on multidimensional poverty indexes and human development indexes for each of the 15 administrative districts.

43. In his presentation on the ATLAS, representative of the CSO in Trinidad and Tobago noted that the project had been a learning exercise and highlighted that it could be applied to other areas of the work of the CSO. The data was not sufficient to allow for the construction of the human development index based on the traditional definition which entailed the use of measures of literacy/education, life expectancy and standard of living, the indicator was redefined for this national undertaking and included the use the following variables: income per capita, number of years of schooling, health and the incidence of chronic illness in TTO. While the prevalence of chronic illness was not typically used for assessing human development, the lack of data on life expectancy coupled with the peculiarities of the region such as high prevalence rate justify the use of this indicator as a substitute. The ALTAS also presented data disaggregated by geographic area for the Multi Dimensional Poverty index (MPI) which calculated households well being based on criteria, such as, access to electricity, drinking water, sanitation, flooring, cooking fuel and assets. This construct differed from typical or traditional income/expenditure based poverty measure. The presentation also entailed demonstrations of the thematic maps which showed the national standing for each index, as well as disaggregated data for each administrative district. The disaggregated data was efficient in showing disparities that existed within the different municipalities and thus made it easier to devise focused programmes that would help elevate the standards of living in those areas rather than focusing on country as a whole.

44. As an introduction to her presentation, the representative of UNDP/SPARC reiterated the challenges of evidence-based infrastructure and culture in the subregion, all of which she indicated had

been examined by previous speakers. She outlined the mandate of UNDP and its role in facilitating statistical capacity development in the region through SPARC. She stated that SPARC was designed as a multi-donor, multi-country project bringing together stakeholders from governments, inter-governmental organisations, academia, donor organisation and UN agencies, funds and programmes to ensure a coordinated approach to delivery of support for statistical capacity development. She stated that those operating under the SPARC umbrella could opt to deliver support in statistical capacity development, either bilaterally or as part of a joint approach. In that regard, she identified the five core areas for SPARC and highlighted the work that had been carried out in fulfillment of those priorities, which included poverty and MDG monitoring training and knowledge exchanges in CARICOM member States; MDG localization in OECS countries; training in poverty measurement, analysis and data dissemination. The SPARC Coordinator noted that agencies met within the context of the SPARC PSC to plan and report on work on statistical capacity development to ensure greater coordination. Apart from UNDP's support, she highlighted the work of the CDB in country poverty assessments as among deliverables within the SPARC Project. Some of the ongoing activities mentioned were the pilot audit of national statistical system in Saint Lucia, provision of technical support to the Government of Montserrat for modernisation of the national statistics department and assessment of training capacity and needs within CSOs and line ministries. In conclusion, she challenged participants to consider some key questions regarding coordination of efforts and a communication strategy.

45. The representative of UNFPA provided comprehensive insight of the mandates and scope of work of the agency. She highlighted the specific guiding principles that underpinned the work of the agency and which were tied to the main areas of focus namely: sexual and reproductive health, gender and population and development. With respect to data, UNFPA sought to strengthen the availability of data in those areas both at a national and regional level by providing support with data collection for censuses, surveys and other development related research and analysis. There were however challenges with the production of social statistics, specialized data collection activities, the cost of exercises and the irregularity of data collection and compilation.

Discussion

46. One key issue which arose from the maps displayed in the ATLAS was the incongruence between the high levels of female enrolment in school and the disproportionately low female participation rates in the labour force, compared to their male counterparts. The ILO representative cited a number of reasons that could account for this disparity, one of which may be that women are of child bearing age or that educated females may be waiting off until they find appropriate jobs.

47. The Economic Affairs Officer, ECLAC, alluded to his experience with the Human Development Index (HDI) in Jamaica and observed that while many countries desire improvements in the index, the relative ranking of those countries continued to decline as a result of prevailing economic and other situations. On those grounds, he noted that there was room for refining the indices in the context of the existing economic/financial environments. He further remarked that constructs, such as the HDI, took into consideration only one facet of measurement and did not give a full assessment of the situation that existed on the ground. Notwithstanding that, he noted that the HDI was improved over the use of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as basis for welfare. He elaborated on the nature and dynamism of poverty and three types of households: those that start poor and remain in perpetual poverty; those that start poor but are eventually elevated out of poverty; and those who become poor due to job losses and other severe circumstances. He lamented that poverty measurements were premised on these static notions that did not take into account those cycles.

48. The representative of CARICOM commended the presentation on the ATLAS and remarked the value of this initiative as a further demonstration of the capacity of statistical offices, and a means of shifting focus from the deficits to what can be achieved.

6. Drafting of an action plan for sustainable statistical capacity development

49. The representative of CIDA gave an overview of the results-based management (RBM) framework used by the agency for managing its international development programme. He outlined the main tools of the RBM and emphasized the use of the logic model in preparing project proposals for consideration by the agency. He also pointed to a list of qualitative and quantitative indicators that should be incorporated into the proposal and underscored the other key elements that should be considered in the programming. He emphasized the importance of having some familiarity with the activities that are being implemented in the region so as to avoid duplication, and of engaging member states in consultations on the proposed project. He also listed a number of other issues that should be considered such as sustainability, project management, and development outcomes for beneficiaries, and lessons learned in capacity building. He identified the main priority areas for CIDA and concluded by reiterating a number of points that should be considered and reflected in project proposals.

50. The Project Director of the CARICOM Secretariat presented a possible approach to the development of the CIDA proposal reiterating the long term goal of CIDA for the Caribbean in helping to build a prosperous and integrated Caribbean Community. She also emphasized the importance of developing a project proposal that is aligned with the Caribbean Programme Logic Model of CIDA. Highlighting feedback received from CIDA to this point she noted that while statistics was a cross cutting issue which could be aligned with all the immediate outcomes, there is need for a clear focus on one particular outcome and indicated that this could be the one relating to “increased capacity of national and regional public institutions to better manage public finances and debt”. She further identified some of the key regional priorities based on meetings of Heads of governments of CARICOM that were held in May and July 2011. As a consequence, a possible area that may be supported is that of Economic statistics through the National Accounts statistics, but illustrated diagrammatically how other areas of statistics can be linked to the National Accounts. She underscored the importance of sustainability, not just in filling the existing data gaps but in having a wider impact and enabling transformation change at a national and regional level and in building a better sense of community.

Discussion

51. In response to a comment raised by a representative from ECLAC on the issue of Economic Statistics not being a problem relative to Social Statistics, the representative of the CARICOM Secretariat referred to the presentation of the representative of the UNFPA in which she stated that Economic Statistics was a “little better” than Social Statistics. She highlighted some critical issues with Economic Statistics that do not appear to be easily discernable given that countries routinely report their GDP growth rate. She stated that there are serious problems with national accounts and indicated some key tables from the internationally recommended Minimum Required Data Set (MRDS) that are not being produced by countries of the region with the exception of Jamaica. One example being expenditure on GDP by constant prices. She observed that the latter was produced by the CSO of Trinidad and Tobago in the past, but this has been discontinued. She also noted that persistent challenge with supply and use tables (SUTS), the inability to produce statistics on trade in services at the detailed level required by negotiators, the lack of some key short-term indices. In addition she remarked that while it is important to produce the data, equal importance must be attributed to the data quality in terms of the basic data sources, she pointed to the unreliability of the data due to high non-response rates from the business establishments that form the backdrop of the production of the GDP. .

52. The representative of the CARICOM Secretariat directed a number of questions to the representative of UNDP/SPARC on (i) In terms of the capacity what is the issue?; (ii) In terms of the multi-donor issue what is happening with the other donors?; and (iii) Are World Bank (WB) and CIDA contributing anything in cash or kind?

In response, the representative of UNDP/SPARC stated that the organization also needed feedback from CARICOM about the key issues and how they could move forward. She noted that there had been a lull with people moving to/from both organizations, and carrying the knowledge with them elsewhere, etc. UNDP/SPARC outlined that UNDP and the World Bank had held recent discussions on possible areas of collaboration that CDB had continued to be fully engaged and there were discussions on concrete areas of collaboration. She added that CIDA on the other hand, had not been as engaged as the other organizations, although the representative on the committee was initially engaged in the process. This she added could have been a result of shifts in priorities at intervals since the inception of the project.

53. In response to a question on the MICS survey, the representative of UNICEF indicated that there are known gaps in the socio-economic statistics regarding children. However the survey cannot be conducted in every country because it is usually based on the country's peculiarities, and as such, is not always relevant in every country. In light of that there has been a shift in focus and UNICEF is now exploring the use of administrative data generated on a regular basis, especially with regard to issues of early childhood development. He noted the lack of information available from private education centres. In addition, there has been a big thrust towards the collection of data on protective services of children.

7. Group discussions, presentations and recommendations

54. This agenda item was devoted to the preparation of the framework for a proposal to the CIDA and took the form of an extended plenary session chaired by representatives of CARICOM, CIDA and ECLAC. Representatives of statistical offices, regional and international agencies identified their main priorities for statistics. Following the initial round of discussion, the areas identified were grouped and classified as immediate, medium term or long-term targets.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

55. The meeting concluded with a summary of the main recommendations from the discussions and closing statements from the representatives of ECLAC and CARICOM.

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