

7th MDG Regional Seminar: The Post-2015 Development Agenda and Challenges for the National Statistical Systems of Latin America and the Caribbean

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Improving the National Statistical System to inform the Emerging Development Agenda

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Introduction:

The past thirteen years since the turn of the century has seen many developments in Saint Lucia's statistical infrastructure in response to development imperatives encapsulated in the indicators for measuring the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). We have within the regional framework of support provided by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), CARICOM and our partner UN regional agencies in the Caribbean, namely, UNECLAC, UNDP, UNICEF and ILO developed our response to the MDG goals in various explicit ways. Firstly in the area of poverty measurement and in collaboration with the CDB we successfully completed two living standards measurement surveys in 1995 and 2006 with another planned for 2014. With the completion of the ICP process UNECLAC has worked with us to ensure that PPP conversion factors will be available for the Caribbean region for the 2011 round to avoid the problems created by estimates of HDI and similar indicators made, since the Caribbean did not participate in the 2005 ICP round. The UNDP and UNICEF offices in the Caribbean worked with our Statistical Office in St Lucia to conduct a CWIQ survey in 2004 and the first MICS survey in the OECS region in 2012. The Trinidad office of the ILO provided support in improving our quarterly labour force survey working with our regional peers to harmonize concepts for the measurement of labour market statistics, introducing informal sector and informal employment measurements and assisting in preparing our office for the introduction of updated ICLS (International Conference of Labour Statisticians) recommendations for the measurement of employment and unemployment statistics. All of these and many other statistical development activities which we have engaged in has been very well supported through the coordinating and supporting role which the CARICOM Secretariat has provided.

The first theme which the Report of the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the post-2015 Development Agenda challenges us to address is "**Leave no one behind**". MDG 1 was not very applicable since in terms of the 1.25 US a day the level of poverty is 3%; while our national poverty level is 28.8%. In this respect we must seek to adopt improved methods of poverty measurement which are multidimensional. Single dimensional, money metric approaches to poverty measurement too often obscures key non-income deprivations associated with basic human rights to education, nutrition, empowerment of women, and information amongst others and often does not allow us to use related statistical indicators to show how people are poor and affected by various government policies. The developing work of Professors Alkire and Foster of Oxford Poverty and Human Development Institute (OPHI) has provided a strong theoretical and philosophical basis for this work. While it is important to maintain the elegance of communication associated with current single dimensional money metric poverty measures we must embrace these new emerging methodologies associated with multidimensional measures. Coneval in Mexico has this mandate enshrined in its 2004 law and similar developments have occurred in Columbia which we can replicate to our benefit in Saint Lucia specifically but also in the wider Caribbean region. In this regard we would like to continue our partnership with CDB on poverty measurement from this more holistic perspective. In the OECS Sub-region of CARICOM with the support of the World Bank we have set up a Living Standards Measurement Committee which will seek to assist

us with evaluating, adopting and implementing various poverty measurement methodologies within a multi-year modular sample survey data collection framework.

In 2012 with the support of UNICEF we completed our first MICS Survey. This allowed us to measure some new MDG indicators on women and children specifically. The implementation of the MICS on a continuous basis is very important. To be sure for a small state where a sample size of a minimum of 4% is required for statistically significant estimates of population characteristics to be made, a MICS is a costly undertaking. To ensure that we continue to conduct it on a regular basis we must find appropriate means of integrating modules of the MICS into our more frequent data collection activities even while we can commit to doing the traditional version of the MICS once every five years. UNICEF needs to continue to explore appropriate means of working with Caribbean countries in reducing the cost of MICS implementation without compromising on data quality. We think using new technologies for tablet computer geocoded data capture such as those being developed by the World Bank computational tools program are useful methods to implement to reduce cost and processing time and improve data quality. Indeed, our partnership with the computational tools program of the World Bank has already brought us these tangible benefits since we rolled out the collection of the labour force survey on tablets using these tools in the current round of the labour force survey.

With respect to the themes of sustainable development, jobs and inclusive growth the process by which we compile and build indicators for our national economic accounts, labour force surveys and measure environmental indicators must reflect our current and future development imperatives. Saint Lucia has had challenges in updating GDP at the basic ISIC level through the use of a supply and use table, however, to ensure indicators are available to better monitor developments of an economic and environmental nature we will endeavor to continue to improve data availability for ISIC subsectors which will allow the extraction of a tourism satellite and possibly environmental economic accounts to ensure that environmental statistics collected through various public administrative processes are cast within a framework to assist policy makers with the implementation of the sustainable development agenda and address our special vulnerabilities to natural disasters in the future.

In developing the indicators to monitor the emerging development agenda, labour market statistics will play a central role. Saint Lucia has participated in the Working Group on Labour Market Indicators of Latin America and the Caribbean and this group has made important contributions to the development of improved measurements of the labour market. An impressive amount of work was done under the leadership of INE Chile of the impact on the measurement of unemployment of the 19th ICLS recommendations. While we will seek to incorporate the new recommendations from the ICLS into our questionnaires to better measure paid employment, labour underutilization, informality and decent work and align these measurements to the SNA production boundary we must realize that these are labour demand side measures. Consequently, we must also focus on the supply side of the labour market, better streamline administrative Social Security data for statistical reporting, conduct establishment based job openings and labour turnover surveys to measure skills gaps and identify sectors of job creation. This will ensure that our policy makers are aware of the skill needs of expanding businesses to support them in enabling the provision of sustainable jobs especially to the young in the labour force where unemployment rates are high.

In all areas of statistical development activity the importance of working with the custodians of administrative data is going to be at the very heart of our Statistical Development agenda. In the areas of health, education, environment, lands and survey, social protection, internal revenue, telecommunications our ability to build effective relationships to these sources of big, increasingly transactional geocoded data will help very much in achieving the dream of the authors of the report of the high level panel to and I quote "build an independent and rigorous monitoring with regular opportunities to report on progress and shortcomings at the highest political level". The CARICOM Secretariat has produced a model statistics

bill from which can evolve national legislation to support the independent monitoring systems required in the future we want.

HEALTH

We continue to face challenges building effective partnerships with some agencies holding administrative data, in the area of health statistics our challenge is to improve the availability of morbidity statistics critical to understanding the impact of health care provision or lack thereof on worker productivity. There is also the challenge of improving the processes and technology of capture of data on mortality generally but maternal and child mortality, births and deaths which will lead to more timely production of this information.

EDUCATION

Saint Lucia has a very good education statistics collection and dissemination system for schools especially up to the secondary level. The main issue for us and the Caribbean region generally have been the measurement of literacy. Many studies of developed and developing find such a strong correlation between skills and growth giving significant credence to human-capital theory, and to the view that investing in skills brings long-term economic rewards. (Literacy scores, human capital and growth across 14 OECD countries. By Serge Coulombe, Jean-François Tremblay and Sylvie Marchand. Published by Statistics Canada.) CARICOM has embarked on a process to support the conduct of literacy surveys in the Caribbean to allow the conduct of literacy surveys and ensure that internationally benchmarked literacy indicators are available to allow the education authorities in our countries to better respond to the skill development needs of the population crucial to addressing issues of productivity, youth unemployment and economic competitiveness.

In an effort to respond to the emerging development agenda small island developing states (SIDS) which have vulnerable statistical systems where personnel tend to be spread thin over a multitude of varying statistical activities will need strong regional and global partners. Our partners must continue to assist us in building tools which enable effective compliance with recognized data standards, such as SDMX, DDI. The continued development of dissemination tools such as REDATAM by UNECLAC, DEV INFO by the UN and IHSN (International Household Survey Network) metadata tools by the World Bank and others already mentioned assist us in rising to the challenge issued by High Level Panel of Eminent Persons for addressing the Post-2015 development imperatives.