

**ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES TO MONITOR THE ACTIVITIES OF  
SIMDG COMMITTEES IN MEMBER STATES**

One of the activities under the CARICOM Programme on Social Gender and Environment Statistics was the establishment of SIMDG (Social Indicators and Millennium Development Goals) Committee in Member States, which comprises of both users and producers of social and gender statistics. The objective of this activity is to strengthen the capability of National Statistics Offices (NSO) in Member States to collect, compile, analyse and disseminate social gender statistics and indicators on a sustained basis. During March – July 2003, CARICOM Staff visited all Member States with the exception of Bermuda, Cayman Islands and Haiti to conduct meetings with stakeholders in an effort to commence the process of establishing SIMDG Committees. Meetings to establish similar committees will be conducted in the other three (3) Member States during 2004.

In an effort to monitor the activities of the SIMDG Committees, one way was via a questionnaire, which was designed by The Secretariat and circulated in September 2003 to the seventeen (17) Member States in which SIMDG Meetings were held.

As at 3 February 2004, twelve (12) Member States have completed and returned their questionnaires to the Secretariat, these Member States are:

- Anguilla
- Barbados
- Belize
- The Bahamas
- Dominica
- Grenada
- Guyana
- St. Kitts and Nevis
- St. Vincent and the Grenadines
- Suriname
- Trinidad and Tobago
- Turks and Caicos

Questionnaires are still outstanding from Antigua and Barbuda, British Virgin Islands, Jamaica, Montserrat and Saint Lucia.

An analysis of the questionnaires, which were received by The Secretariat, reveals the following:

#### **A. Formation and Composition of SIMDG Committees**

- (i) An SIMDG Committee was formed in each Member State after the SIMDG Meeting was held with the exception of Trinidad and Tobago and Turks and Caicos.

In the case of Belize, there is an existing Social Indicators Committee and the decision was taken not to rename this committee.

In Turks and Caicos, Executive Council must give its approval before any meeting of a national committee can be convened. The issue of the formation of this Committee has been sent to the attention of the Executive Council and while formal approval is being awaited, the National Statistics Office (NSO) will serve as interim chairperson until the national committee selects a chairperson. It was also agreed in principle that the departments represented at the SIMDG Workshop will constitute the national committee and in the interim, the NSO has started to collect some of the data requested.

Trinidad and Tobago did not give a reason for the SIMDG Committee not being formed.

- (ii) In all Member States in which SIMDG Committees were formed, a chairperson was selected and the main producers of data, Education, Health and the NSO are represented on the Committee. With respect to a representative from the Labour Department being part of this committee, Anguilla, Grenada and St. Vincent and The Grenadines reported that this was a problem. Although users of data are represented on all of the SIMDG Committees, only some of the committee have representatives from the private sector, NGOs and International Agencies. It is only in Dominica that there is representation from all of these groups – main producers and users, the private sector, NGOs and International Agencies.

## **B. Main problems/challenges encountered**

- (iii) The main problems/challenges encountered in the formation of the SIMDG Committees were identified as follows:
- (a) **Anguilla** – The committee was not seen as the best means to provide the statistics required, therefore it was decided that committee meetings were not necessary but instead the NSO representative would meet with line departments individually to decide on the best means to produce the statistics required;
  - (b) **The Bahamas** – Recruiting representatives from the various agencies to serve on the committee, compiling the data in the required format and obtaining the data from the relevant agencies in a timely manner were the major issues;
  - (c) **Guyana** – Since most sectors are envisaging Human Resource problems, it is difficult to arrange meetings for a time convenient to all committee members. It was also identified that different data users and Funding Organisations (e.g. CARICOM, UNDP, UNICEF and IDB) are doing similar projects and utilising the same personnel from the various sectors - this makes it difficult for personnel to attend all of these meetings. It was suggested that collaboration between these organisations will reduce the response burden;
  - (d) **St Kitts and Nevis** – Recruiting persons from the various agencies to serve on this committee;
  - (e) **St. Vincent and the Grenadines** – No representation from the Department of Labour;
  - (f) **Suriname** – Arranging a convenient time for all stakeholders to meet; and reaching an agreement on the priority list since the representatives from the Health Sector considered that the AIDS component is over represented on the list; and
  - (g) **Turks and Caicos** – Bureaucratic procedures that are required to be followed and the priorities of the Executive Council.

### **C. SIMDG Committee Meetings**

- (iv) Both Dominica and Turks and Caicos reported that it is necessary for the Cabinet to approve the appointment of the SIMDG Committee. Turks and Caicos is still awaiting this approval. In Dominica, approval was not sought. In Grenada, although it was not necessary, permission was obtained from the Cabinet. In all Member States, except Turks and Caicos, a first SIMDG meeting was held post the CARICOM Meeting. In Belize, the Social Indicator Committee (SIC) meet every four to six (4 to 6) weeks and minutes are kept. With the exception of Anguilla and St. Vincent and The Grenadines, reports were prepared for the first meeting. In most cases, these reports were not circulated to either the CARICOM Secretariat or to committee members. Barbados and Suriname reported that their reports were circulated to the committee members.
- (v) In Barbados, The Bahamas, Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Vincent and The Grenadines, a second SIMDG Committee meeting was held. In Barbados and Dominica, reports were prepared for this meeting but only circulated to committee members. Barbados and Dominica also reported that more than two SIMDG Committee meetings were held; a report for the meeting was prepared in the case of Dominica.
- (vi) In all Members States, the agenda of the SIMDG meetings included discussions on the Group 1 social indicators and in five Member States (The Bahamas, Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and The Grenadines and Suriname) the issue of harmonization of metadata was included on the agenda.

### **D. Data Compilation and Submission to the Secretariat**

- (vii) With respect to the table formats to be used in the data compilation process, which were prepared and distributed by the CARICOM Secretariat, all Member States reported that they had received the formats and in general both content and instructions were clear. Anguilla and Barbados reported that they were having problems with the table formats. For Anguilla, the problem was with the definitions provided, while Barbados did not indicate the specific area(s) in which difficulties were encountered.

- (viii) With the exception of Guyana, work has commenced on the production of the indicators. Suriname had started this process but this was abandoned when the General Bureau of Statistics was destroyed by fire. In most cases, the Education and Health sectors are compiling their respective indicators and to a large extent this also applies to the Labour sector. For Belize, Grenada, St. Vincent and The Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago the indicators and statistics relating to labour are being compiled by the National Statistics Office; NSO, Trinidad and Tobago is also compiling the data for education statistics. As mentioned before, in Turks and Caicos, the Statistics Office is coordinating the data compilation process in consultation with the sectors; while some of the data is already in the statistics office, in other instances, contact is being made with the sectors.
- (ix) Anguilla, The Bahamas, Dominica, Guyana, St. Vincent and The Grenadines and Turks and Caicos indicated that their data would have been submitted to the CARICOM Secretariat by the 31 October 2003 deadline. As at 3 February 2004, the Secretariat has only received the following data:
- (a) **Anguilla and Turks and Caicos** have submitted all of their available data;
  - (b) **St. Kitts and Nevis** – Crime, Education, Health-Aids, Health-Other and Population and Family;
  - (c) **St. Vincent and The Grenadines** – Decision-Making, Economy, Education, Health-Aids and Health-Other;
  - (d) **The Bahamas** – Education, Population and Family; Work, Health-Other, Health-Aids, Crime, Decision-Making and Economy. The Decision-Making and Economy workbooks, which were submitted to the Secretariat, did not have any data and this has been brought to the attention of the NSO;
  - (e) **Barbados** – Crime and Work;
  - (f) **Dominica** – Education; and
  - (g) **Belize** – Economy

Several of the Millennium Development Goals indicators are included in the data that were submitted by Member States to the Secretariat. Some of these indicators are as follows:

- (a) **Anguilla** – net enrolment ratio in primary education, ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary schools, infant mortality rate, access to safe water and sanitation and unemployment rate of 15 to 24 year olds.
  - (b) **Barbados** – unemployment rate of 15 to 24 year olds;
  - (c) **Dominica** – net enrolment ratio in primary education, ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education, infant mortality rate, under five mortality rate and maternal mortality ratio;
  - (d) **St. Vincent and The Grenadines** – net enrolment ratio in primary education, ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary education, proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5, contraceptive prevalence rate and HIV prevalence among 15 to 24 year old pregnant women;
  - (e) **St. Kitts and Nevis** – ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education, infant mortality rate and child mortality rate; and
  - (f) **The Bahamas** – infant mortality rate, prevalence of underweight children under five years of age and literacy rate of 15 to 24 year olds.
- (x) The Member States which indicated that they would not be able to meet the October 31 deadline give the following dates as when their completed table formats would be submitted to the Secretariat;
- (a) **Barbados** – mid-November 2003;
  - (b) **Belize** – November month end 2003;
  - (c) **Grenada** – November month end 2003;

However, as at 3 February 2004, no data has been received from Grenada while the crime and work sections have been submitted by Barbados. The only data that was submitted by Belize related to the economy section. Belize also sent the Family Health Survey 1999, Male and Female publication to the Secretariat.

- (d) **St. Kitts and Nevis** – February 2004;
- (e) **Suriname** – February 2004;

- (f) **Trinidad and Tobago** – January 2004
- (xi) All Member States with the exception of The Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago reported that the Committee would discuss the first draft of the completed table formats before finalization and release.
- (xii) Member States also indicated that they have plans to prepare national reports in the future.
- (xiii) With respect to the availability of data for all five (5) years (1998-2002) for most (75%) of the indicators, Member States reported the following:
- (a) **Anguilla** - All of the requested data are available in the areas of economy, education, crime and decision-making. For population, families and households, work, health and poverty, data for only one (1) year are available;
  - (b) **Belize** - All of the requested data are available except in the areas of crime, health and poverty. No data are available for crime and for health and poverty, data for four (4) years and one (1) year are available respectively;
  - (c) **The Bahamas** - While all of the requested data are available for population, data are available for one (1) year in the area of poverty and for one (1) year to four (4) years in the area of family and households. The availability of data for the other areas was not indicated;
  - (d) **Dominica** - All of the requested data are available except in the area of poverty for which only one (1) year data are available;
  - (e) **Grenada** indicated that all of the requested data are available;
  - (f) **Guyana** - All of the requested data are available for education, health, crime and decision-making. With respect to families and households, work, economy and poverty, data are available for 2 years, and for population, 3 years data are available;
  - (g) **St. Kitts and Nevis** - Data are available for all the areas although no indication was given as to what data are actually available for the specific areas;

- (h) **Suriname** - All of the requested data are available in the areas of population and economy. For families and households, education and poverty, data are available for 2 years, 1 to 3 years and 1 to 4 years respectively. No indication was given as to what data are available for the other areas; and
- (i) **Turks and Caicos** - indicated that some of the requested data are available although no specific details were provided.

Barbados, St. Vincent and The Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago did not provide any information regarding the availability of data for the requested indicators.

#### **E. Other Comments and Issues**

- (xiv) Other issues raised included:
  - (a) **Anguilla** - The details requested are not useful in many cases to Anguilla. There are no available funds to conduct surveys every year;
  - (b) **Belize** - The Social Indicators Committee is now a sub-committee of the National Human Development Advisory Committee, which has the full endorsement of Cabinet and has the same objectives as the SIMDG Committees;
  - (c) **Dominica** - Requested clarification as to what would be the functions of the Committee after the submission of the data;
  - (d) **Guyana** - Although the formats are clear, sectors are suggesting that they should be changed to suit their form of reporting. The question was raised whether changes could be made to the formats. In addition, it is the intention of the Statistics Bureau (chairperson) to meet with the individual sectors to have a more in-depth discussion on the data required;
  - (e) **St. Vincent and The Grenadines** – The October deadline would enable more data to be collected and hopefully data would be available from the census. The Police Department is experiencing difficulty in gathering information from the Out District Police Stations and the Family Planning Department is experiencing problems obtaining data on contraceptives;

- (f) **Suriname** – The activities of the SIMDG committee were severely hampered in the aftermath of the fire of 5 August 2003 that destroyed the premises of the General Bureau of Statistics; and
- (g) **Turks and Caicos** – The departments appreciated the Meeting that was held to establish the SIMDG Committee and expressed interest in having the national committee.

## **F. Conclusion and Recommendations**

There is need for continuous monitoring and evaluating of the activities of SIMDG Committees in Member States since this would enable the Secretariat to assist Member States in the areas in which they are having difficulties. In recognition of this, The Secretariat is planning to visit Member States in which SIMDG Committees were established to meet with committee members so that the operations of these Committees can be examined. These visits would provide the opportunity for Secretariat Staff and committee members to identify and discuss the areas in which problems are being encountered in the data collection and compilation process. The Secretariat will also provide on-the-job training to committee members in identified priority areas as well as suggest and install mechanisms to promote the collection of social data from administrative records, and in particular, the collection of data that may be available to produce the core indicators. This follow-up activity is very important since it would assist to enhance national capacity and fill some of the current data gaps.

Notwithstanding the approach of Anguilla, The Secretariat will still attempt to convince this country about the need for having meetings, workshops or seminars to further develop capacity and expertise in data analysis and the use of the data in policy formation. The case of Trinidad and Tobago will also require intensive follow-up activities. Similarly, Turks and Caicos will be monitored.

### **Note:**

Since the preparation of this report, Trinidad and Tobago submitted data for the Work and Economy sections to the Secretariat (12 February 2004).