

# **ESTABLISHING COMMITTEES TO PRODUCE SOCIAL INDICATORS ON A SUSTAINED BASIS, AND TO FACILITATE THE CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT OF ACHIEVEMENTS RELATED TO THE MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs)**

## **1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Social Indicators and MDGs Committees, when adequately staffed and reasonably resourced can provide an efficient vehicle for the production of Social Indicators and statistics on a timely and reliable basis. Such committees are also best placed to monitor developments with respect to set targets and goals. Hence, these committees are crucial in monitoring and assessing the achievements of targets and goals set by countries, under the umbrella of the MDGs.

### **1.2 The Current Situation**

Currently, in all member states of the Caribbean Community, the production of social statistics is quite fragmented in the sense that the National Statistical Organizations (NSOs) are not currently involved directly, in the collection of all social data, and the subsequent generation of social statistics and indicators. For example, in all of these countries, education data and statistics are collected and compiled by the education authorities. So also are the countries' health data. The housing authorities in a few of these countries are also producing their housing statistics, and recently, many member states have taken on projects which seek to strengthen capabilities of the departments of labour to collect and compile labour market statistics and indicators.

### **1.3 The Need for Team Work**

However, even though the NSOs may not be directly involved with some of the key social statistics, because they often have much greater statistical expertise than personnel working at the social sector ministries, close

cooperation and collaboration between these social organizations and the statistical authorities, on statistical issues and policy related matters are essential, in order to enhance efficient policy formulation and implementation. The establishment of the above named committees will therefore bring together both the main producers of data as well as some of the main users. Therefore, all of the relevant stakeholders will be represented on the committees and this will greatly enhance the production of the social indicators in a timely fashion. The inclusion of users and producers of data on the committee, will also enhance the process of policy implementation. In particular, since the committee will be in a privileged position, it will also monitor the MDG indicators, which are already included in the set of social indicators which the committee will generate. The committee will therefore be in a strategic position to assist in the assessment of progress towards the achievement of the Millenium Development Goals. The full involvement of all stakeholders on the committees is therefore crucial.

## **2. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **2.1 Two Major Goals**

Fundamentally, a SIMDGC comprises stakeholders from all the various government and non-government organizations, together with the relevant international agencies operating within the countries. Among its major terms of reference, two goals of the committee can be identified.

1. Firstly, the establishment and operation of the committee enhances the need and importance for the respective country to take greater responsibilities to collect and compile data in order to provide the essential indicators. These indicators will greatly assist in improving decision making with respect to the various social policy formulation and implementation. Important social policy commitments, reflected in the MDGs, were made by the various member states of the Caribbean Community. This committee will ensure that the required indicators are available in a timely and accurate manner in order to assess progress in

meeting these commitments. The availability of indicators can also help in guiding resource allocation between the various sectors and within the social sector itself, as well as in guiding national action priorities.

2. Secondly, this committee will help to facilitate the creation of a network for information sharing and integrated social sector planning, since the committee comprises all possible stakeholders, who are both users and producers of information .

## **2.2 The Main Objectives of the SIMDG Committees**

Several objectives of a Social Indicators and Millenium Development Goals Committee can also be identified. The committee can determine and maintain a set of selected indicators of social development informed by international experience and methodology, but essentially reflecting national priorities of local concern.

1. Currently, one of the major thrusts of the CARICOM Secretariat, is to establish a core data set for the region. This was the major rationale for the current CARICOM Social and Gender Statistics programme. It is envisaged that this committee will play a key role in enhancing some of the major attributes of this core data set, such as data relevance and harmonization at the national level, to name a few. The CARICOM secretariat is therefore playing a leading role in establishing these committees, which will play a key role in capacity building in the area of social and gender statistics.
2. Next, the SIC will make recommendations to the organizations responsible for data collection on how to standardize and improve the quality of data, and to coordinate training among the participating organizations. Since these organizations will be fully represented on the committee, the adoption and implementation of these recommendations will be smooth and prompt.
3. Third, the committee will gradually expand the list of indicators and promote data collection in order to improve the information on new areas

of concern. This will be very important since the rapid social transformations taking place, will demand the expansion of the list of indicators on a continuous basis. This again further accentuates the need for the committee to meet on a very regular basis and for special consideration to be given on the meeting's agenda to discuss recent developments in the social sector.

4. Fourth, the committee will collate, compile and publish the indicators in document form. The statistical data will be accompanied by explanatory narrative summaries, and will reflect commitments to targets and make recommendations for future action. As such, the committee will impact crucially on the Millennium Development assessment reports, which will reflect the achievement of the MDGs.
5. Fifth, the committee will be charged with the wide dissemination of the document containing the analysis on an annual basis.
6. Finally, the SIMDG committees will monitor the quality of data being used by local and international organizations and make recommendations on action to be taken based on these findings.

### **3. EXPECTED OUTPUTS AND RESULTS**

#### **3.1 Data Quality**

Some of the expected outputs and results are summarized below.

1. First, on an annual basis, the committee will be best placed to recommend priority actions for improving data collection systems in the field of social statistics. The fact that one of the committee's key concerns is to do with the quality of data generated, the team of professionals participating on the committee in their deliberations prior to the release of the indicators will be able to identify weaknesses in the data collection systems, and therefore recommend remedial action. As a team of users and producers, they will also be more able to mobilize resources for such action.

2. Next, the Committee will steer the annual publication of a list of selected social indicators, and some basic analyses of these indicators. The analytical reports will greatly complement the MDGs assessment reports, which will eventually be done, on an annual basis, for all countries of the community. Hence, the committee's role will be crucial in assessing social policy developments.
3. Thirdly, the committee will make recommendations on an annual basis, on priority actions to be taken based on findings and analysis of the selected indicators. Since some members of the committee will also be policy advisers, it will be much easier for the efforts of the committee to impact on policy issues. Because of the good representation of policy personnel on the committee, this will help to assure that the planners and policy makers receive the annual recommendations on priority actions to be taken based on findings and analysis of the selected indicators. The activities of the committee will produce a cadre of trained personnel in all participating organizations.
4. Finally, the committee will conduct workshops and meetings for nationwide public dissemination of data. It is crucial that quick action be taken to disseminate the outputs of the committee. This will maximize the usefulness of the committee's efforts, and will, in addition, strengthen their credibility and attract resources to sustain its work.

#### **4. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS**

##### **4.1 Level of Representation**

The following will be the major responsibilities of the members of the Social Indicators and Millenium Development Goals Committee.

1. It is crucially important that all members attend meetings and participate actively in discussions at these meetings. Hence, even though the representatives on the committee should be persons at a reasonably high

- level in the hierarchy, if s/he cannot regularly attend its meetings, the deputy in this case, may be the most appropriate representative.
2. Further, it is strongly recommended that the same person, who should be at the middle level of management, at least, attend all meetings, as far as possible. It would be as counterproductive if there was no attendance, as it would be if different persons attend different meetings often. All members should also actively partake in continuous assessments of the present data collection systems. The assessments will include an evaluation of the reliability as well as the relevance of the indicators being monitored.

#### **4.2 Other Duties and Responsibilities**

1. Next, the members should take or facilitate any necessary action based on the findings of the above-mentioned assessment. This action will include the coordination of training and also the dissemination of the outputs of the committee.
2. In addition, all members should assist in the yearly revision of the selected list of indicators to address new areas of concern. As societies are transformed, new social issues take prominence.
3. All members of the committee should also assist in establishing standard definitions and methodologies to be used in calculating the selected indicators by attending workshop sessions for the committee members and through other means. The CARICOM Secretariat is actively promoting the establishment of a core data set for the region and for this to be a success in the emerging CSME, definitions and methodologies will have to be standardized, as far as possible.
4. Also, as far as possible, all members should be involved in the actual collection of the data necessary for their respective sector, and in the construction of the indicators relevant to its work. This involvement may be in different ways. For example, it can take the form of direct involvement in the fieldwork required to gather the data, or it may be

mere involvement in the training of the data collectors. Involvement may also take the form of participating in the training sessions and meetings or discussions necessary to prepare the field staff to collect the data. The collection of data and the construction of indicators should be completed in a timely manner and the information should be shared with all members of the committee.

5. Finally, all committee members should provide any necessary analysis and recommendations based on the findings for inclusion in the yearly publication, and assist in the dissemination of the data. The dissemination of the data will include formal presentation of reports and findings to users of the information, and all members should partake actively in these efforts.

## **5. THE COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE**

### **5.1 The Need for the Involvement and Empowerment of all Stakeholders**

1. It is recommended that the Social Indicators and Millenium Development Goals Committee comprise representatives of the Social Sector organizations involved in data collection, as well as some representation of the important users of such data. This is crucial for the successful functioning of the committee in producing the key indicators on a timely and regular basis.
2. Also, users and producers of these data represent the major stakeholders, and evidence shows that success can only be guaranteed when these players are fully involved in the entire process. When all stakeholders are involved, they are feel more empowered and full ownership of the product is guaranteed. When one feels empowered, both the process and the product involved, are enhanced.

## **5.2 The Recommended Composition**

Whereas countries are free to choose their own representatives, experience has shown that members from the following organizations can be quite effective.

<b><u>Organization</u></b>	<b><u>Post</u></b>
Central Statistical Office (co-chair)	Statistician, Social and Demographic Section
Min. of Human Resources (co-chair)	Social Planner
Population Unit	Policy Planner
Women's Department	Director
Labour Department	Labour Economist
Min. of Economic Development	Social Planner
Min. of Education	Head, Planning Unit
Min. of Health	Head, Planning Unit
Medical Statistical Office	Head
Maternal and Child Health Unit	Head
Public Health Bureau	Head
Min. of Housing	Head, Planning Unit
Min. of Finance	Economist
Vital Statistics	Deputy Registrar of Vital Events
The Local University	Head of Sociology or Economics Department
UNICEF	Director
Social Investment Fund	Executive Director
Nat. Committee for Families and Children	Executive Secretary
Family Planning Association	Executive Director
Social Security Board	Head, Research and Statistics Section
UNDP	Planner
PAHO	Epidemiologist

## **6. BUDGET**

The CARICOM Secretariat will facilitate the process of establishing these committees, which will greatly enhance the process of strengthening capacity in the region in the area of Social and Gender Statistics. These committees will also play a crucial role in the compilation of the MDG reports. The most cost effective strategy to assist with the establishment of these committees is for 2 or 3 staff members of CARICOM (including the coordinator of the programme) to visit all member states and associate member states for a period of 1 to 2 days. During this visit, the CARICOM staff will do a quick on the spot review of the existing capacity in the area of Social and Gender statistics, and conduct a one day meeting for all members of the committee. A budget for this activity is detailed below.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

In order to enhance the process of institutionalizing the production of social statistics, a committee as described above will be extremely helpful. This committee should therefore be established promptly and set in motion the important task of compiling and publishing the agreed list of indicators on a continuous and sustained basis. It is essential that the local heads of the central statistical organizations of the various member states takes the initiative to convene an inaugural meeting in their respective countries to start the important process. It is also important that the local statistical organization chairs this committee. The CARICOM Secretariat will provide the necessary logistical support to facilitate the process.