



Stats News & Views

COUNTDOWN TO CARIBBEAN STATISTICS DAY

Special Issue

Advocating for STATISTICS in the Region

Caribbean Statistics Day will be celebrated on the 15th of October 2009 by National Statistical Offices as agreed to by the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) at its Thirty-Third Meeting. The rationale for the observance of Statistics Day is to highlight statistics and its crucial role across a wide spectrum of activities – from daily decision-making faced by individuals, businesses, students etc. to planning, policy-making and analysis and research activities of governments, academia and other users. Included in these activities is the use of statistics by the media in educating and informing the population of a country. Expectations are that the observance of Caribbean Statistics Day would garner greater profile for statistics across the Community. The theme suggested for Caribbean Statistics Day follows that of the High-Level Advocacy Forum convened on 30 July in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago - “**Better Statistics, Better Management, Better Development Outcomes**”. It is expected that the observance of Caribbean Statistics Day across the Region would lead to improved awareness of statistics at the national level and across the Region; the promotion of the use of statistics in a wide variety of areas; increased credibility in the statistics produced; and the establishment of new partnerships in the development of statistics.

How can we contribute to help make greater use and better sense of statistics?

(Excerpt from “Managing *bad weather* – making greater use and better sense of statistics” by Gerald Haberkorn and Alick Nyasulu)

Our single biggest challenge as providers of statistics, and this refers to national statistical systems (NSOs, statistical providers in other key government and statutory bodies like departments of Health and Education, central banks; national provident funds), as well as international bodies, including statistical support agencies such as Statistics Programmes of CARICOM and SPC, is to ensure we deliver products and services that meet current needs, and I like to add, also anticipate future needs of our clients and stakeholders.

This is nowhere more prominent than in the current [global] crisis, and in our preoccupation with documenting the known, that is focusing on *actuals*, rather than also look sideways and forward, and ponder *possibles and probables*. Standard indicators, like GDP, GDP per capita, GDP developments over time, don’t tell the story that statisticians should help write, and politicians and the general public would like to hear, such as how the current crisis might affect our wellbeing as a nation, our peoples’ livelihoods, our families’ future, and our own political life expectancy.

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What do we need as statisticians – what can we do to collectively lift our game?

Our needs are simple: to paraphrase international development bank lingo, a good start would be to have an **enabling environment with facilitating conditions** to do our jobs; this does not just refer to more than a survival budget to recruit and retain sufficient staff numbers, adequately trained staff, and a realistic budget to do a competent job – but functioning national statistical systems, regular data user-producer dialogue at the highest level, committed leadership, and a growing culture of evidence-based decision making which places good information at the core of good management and governance. True leadership and top managers come through during tough times – not only when trade balances are positive, revenue is up, and approval ratings are not in the red. And good leadership and management work better in the long-run, if guided by facts rather than fiction, and by understanding and managing reality rather than be solely guided by political instinct and expedience.

Caribbean Statistics Day Observance at the CARICOM Secretariat

The Regional Statistics Sub-programme of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has planned a week of activities to highlight statistics as part of its observance of **Caribbean Statistics Day 2009**. This week will be launched with an opening ceremony on **Monday 12 October 2009** at **10:45am** in the **Conference Room** of the **CARICOM Secretariat**, Turkeyen, Greater Georgetown. It is anticipated that statistical agencies in Member States led by the National Statistical offices will also engage in the observance of this day through their own planned activities. This day as agreed to by the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) at its Thirty-Third Meeting has been planned with the following objectives in mind:-

- to facilitate the placement of statistics high on the development agenda in countries;
- to encourage and develop a culture of statistics among the population – respondents from households and businesses, users in the public and private sectors and in academic and other institutions, and schools and members of the media;
- to foster increased collaboration with data producing/statistical units in line ministries and other agencies and departments of governments;
- to sensitise and inform users, suppliers and producers of the importance of statistics in making informed policy decisions.

In light of these objectives, the Secretariat will be conducting the following activities during the week of Caribbean Statistics Day:-

Resources

The Regional Statistics Sub-programme of the CARICOM Secretariat will be launching the following informational resources as part of its Caribbean Statistics Day Celebration:

- **CARICOMinfo** is an online data dissemination software developed with support from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). It helps to organise and present data on social development indicators;
- **The Help Desk** is a part of the CARICOM Statistics Sub-programme's website developed with support from the European Commission (EC);
- **Census Online** is an online portal for data from previous population and housing censuses developed with support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA);
- **TradSys Online** an online queryable Merchandise Trade Database developed with support from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB);

Publications

Some of the more recent publications produced by the Regional Statistics Sub-programme can be found below:-

- **CSME Profile**
- **CARICOM's Selected Economic Indicators 1997, 2002-2006**
- **National Account Digest 2003-2006**

Suggested Activities

The following activities have been suggested to Member States and Associate Member States in support of Caribbean Statistics Day

- Open day at the National Statistical Offices where the public can visit and questions can be answered by staff.
- Essay competition among high school students on what statistics mean to them and to policy-making (or other suitable themes).
- Talks/lectures, brochures, handouts, press releases, etc. on the importance of accurately filling out forms which may become the foundation of databases that are used by policy makers to inform decisions.
- Visits to schools to talk about careers in Statistics.

- The formal launching of various online informational facilities including CARICOMInfo, Census Online, New look CARICOM Statistics Website, the Help Desk Facility and TradSys Online
- Invitations will be extended to various schools for scheduled visits to the Regional Statistics Sub-programme of the CARICOM Secretariat
- Display of Statistical publications at the Secretariat

How will CARICOM Member States be observing Caribbean Statistics Day ?

Following on the High-Level Advocacy forum, Member States and Associate Members were urged to engage their staff and other statistical agencies in line ministries and other departments in spreading the significance of statistics to the development agenda of the Region through the observance of Caribbean Statistics Day on 15 October 2009.

Caribbean Statistics Day – Anguilla

In observance of this Day, the Anguilla Statistics Department will be organising a number of activities on the 15th October 2009 as well as some pre-events commencing on September 27, 2009.

This initiative is in an effort to create greater awareness and appreciation for statistics, as well as raise attention to the role of statistics in national development, by encouraging a comprehensive collaborative approach to the collection, compilation, and dissemination of statistics. In addition, it is also hoped that greater understanding and use of statistics by persons in Anguilla would be fostered and a culture of statistics promoted in terms of provision of data by respondents.

The theme for this year's events is, 'Produced by Us; for Use by Us' with the focus being, "Why does Anguilla need good statistics".

This year's activities will include following:

- Three competitions; Poem, Word Creation and Statips
- Radio interviews and addresses
- Launching ceremony – Statistics Day

The general public will be invited to the launching ceremony on the 15th of October to be held at the Teachers Resource Centre. This ceremony will be followed later in the day, with a facilitated discussion session entitled, 'Tell us how we can help'. The target group for this session will permanent secretaries and department heads.

Caribbean Statistics Day – Jamaica

The Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) will be celebrating **Statistics Week** during the week of October 12 – October 16, 2009 under the theme, **“Statistics Today...The Foundation for Tomorrow”**. Various activities have been planned as part of an overall strategy to inform the Jamaican society of the availability of statistical goods and services as well as to increase awareness of statistics and its value as an important resource in planning and decision-making.

Included among the week’s activities is a Newspaper Supplement which will be published on **Wednesday, October 14**, in the Jamaican Business Observer. This supplement will be highlighting the need for supporting the development of regional statistics in light of the Caribbean Single Market Economy. Other activities during the week’s celebration will include a presentation of the findings for the Household Expenditure Survey 2004-2005 on **Tuesday, October 13**. There will also be an Open Day on Caribbean Statistics Day, **Thursday, October 15**, during which the first edition of the CAPE Handbook Series for Economics, Sociology and Geography will be launched. The work of each division of the Statistical Institute will also be featured.

Excerpt from Speech given by Secretary-General, CARICOM Secretariat on occasion of the Opening of the High- Level Advocacy Forum on Statistics, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 30 July 2009

Overall, the indications are that the Global Crisis poses both economic and social threats for the Community for sometime to come.

Even before the crisis, however, there was a growing need for high-quality, timely, reliable and relevant official statistics, to meet the demands of monitoring and informing about globalization and about the establishment and performance of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). Such data would relate not only to national income, trade and other economic features but also relating to quality of life issues such as, the incidence and prevalence of communicable and non-communicable diseases, poverty and the status of the environment.

It is also about leaving a legacy for our future. *For how can we plan for the future of our children if we do not even know the extent of the critical issues affecting them today? How can we succeed in building a sustainable region for the future?*

The point here is that we not only have to have data, but to have consistent, timely, relevant and accurate statistics.

Our National Statistical Systems are challenged to provide such data especially on a timely basis to help policy-makers to arrive at appropriate short and long-term decisions. In recognition of this deficiency the CARICOM Secretariat, the SCCS and its subgroup, the Advisory Group on Statistics, with the support of International Development Partners, have been instrumental in efforts to support the development of the statistical infrastructure in Member Countries through building sustainable statistical capacity.



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 Caribbean Community Secretariat
 P.O. BOX 10827,
 Georgetown,
 Guyana

Email: stats1@caricom.org
 Website: www.caricomstats.org