



**Document from the Standing Committee  
of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS)**

for

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith C. Mitchell,  
Prime Minister of Grenada**

**Proposals and Specific Actions to advocate for the  
Improvement of Statistics in CARICOM**

**Follow-up to the Second High Level Advocacy Forum on  
Statistics - Strategising for the Development of Statistics in  
CARICOM in the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

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## **ACRONYMS**

AGS	CARICOM Advisory Group on Statistics
CAPS	Caribbean Association of Professional Statisticians
CoE	Centre of Excellence
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
IDP	International Development Partner
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
MDA	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
NSO	National Statistical Office
NSDS	National Strategy for the Development of Statistics
NSS	National Statistical System
RPG	Regional Public Good
RSDS	Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics
RSWP	Regional Statistical Work Programme
SCCS	Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians
VAT	Value Added Tax



## SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND SPECIFIC ACTIONS

### Issue 1:

The strengthening of the National Statistical Systems (NSS) and specifically the National Statistical Offices (NSO) which are central to the production of official statistics should be pursued by Governments of the Region with respect to the funding of core areas to support the improvement in statistics as follows:

#### **Specific Actions in 1A:**

Measures to fill the gap in the required staffing structure on a phased basis should be developed and implemented by countries over the next 5-7 years. [See Specific Action in 1D and in 2B pertaining to staffing];

The identification of training in statistics for staff of the National Statistical Office (NSO) and in general the National Statistical System (NSS) should be a priority relative to the award of scholarships by Governments/International Development Partners (IDP) - time frame over the next 5 years. [See Specific Action in 3 on tertiary level scholarships to facilitate new entrants into the profession].

#### **Specific Action in 1B:**

Governments should continue to make efforts to update the Statistics Legislation and corresponding regulations and to enable movement to a transformed NSO, autonomous and impartial NSO within an integrated NSS - timeframe over the next 2 years.

#### **Specific Action in 1C:**

Governments should provide support to the launch of the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) process in countries where this has not occurred; should also take steps to support the updating and in approving the NSDS designs that have been formulated by countries; and should support the implementation of the NSDS in order to modernise and transform the NSO and the NSS over the next 3 years. A

Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics (RSDS) to provide a roadmap for statistical development should also be supported. [See Specific Action in 5].

**Specific Action in 1D:**

Financial and related support required *to enable efficiency gains in making available administrative data for the production of statistics*, should be provided by Governments. This financial and related support will be for areas such as, staffing requirements to enable data sharing within the NSS; support to enable agreements among relevant administrative data-producing authorities in Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs); Information Technology (IT) data network/equipment to effect data transfer; support for the implementation of the Statistics Legislation and corresponding regulations [See Specific Action in 1B]; and general support to statistical advocacy within the NSS and in countries, over the next 5 years.

**Specific Action in 1E:**

A Situational Assessment of the current survey programme should be conducted followed by the establishment by Governments of a continuous multi-purpose survey programme in countries where this does not exist or the rationalisation of the programme where it exists, over the next 5-7 years.

**Issue 2:**

Governments should pursue the upgrading of **the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) base** of the NSO/NSS to enable the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics with greater efficiency.

**Specific Actions in 2A:**

The conduct of an IT needs assessment in NSO/NSS should be executed and should be followed by the provision of the requisite state-of-the-art equipment/software for use in statistics data collection, production and dissemination; [See Specific Action in 1D on Data Sharing/Transfer]

The production of e-guidelines to encourage greater use of statistics should be enabled;

Youths should be encouraged to develop mobile applications (apps) in statistics;

The training of statisticians as data scientists to make more effective use of IT and Statistics should be enabled.

All of the above should be over a period of 5 years.

**Specific Action in 2B:**

Governments should enable the positioning/retention of key staff with IT skills within the NSO including enabling adequate remuneration to encourage a career path for these personnel, over the next 3 years.

**Issue 3:**

Governments should promote careers in statistics [linked to IT/data scientists] through embedding it as a data science in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools and make available scholarships at the tertiary level to enable specialisation in statistics.

**Specific Action in 3**

Governments should ensure that there are suitable provisions for scholarships at the tertiary level in statistics; that there are training opportunities for prospective entrants; and that statistics, data science, data analysis and IT are included in an integrated manner in the education curricula at all levels, over the next 5 years. [See Specific Action in 1A on scholarships for current staff of NSO/NSS].

**Issue 4:**

Governments should endorse and promote the Caribbean Association of Professional Statisticians (CAPS).

**Specific Actions in 4:**

Governments should accept, endorse and promote the Caribbean Association of Professional Statisticians and widely publicise the CAPS, over the next 4 years.

Governments should bear the costs of the membership dues for CAPS (institution-level membership) of the NSO and other data producing units in MDAs that are part of the NSS, over the next 4 years.

In addition, Governments can consider the sponsoring of the attendance of at least two representatives from the NSS to attend the annual meeting of the CAPS, for the next 3 years.

**Issue 5:**

Governments should support a regional approach to the development of statistics to optimise scarce resources in the strengthening of the NSS.

**Specific Actions in 5:**

Governments should support and encourage the alignment of the Regional Statistical Work Programme (RSWP) with the strategic objectives currently being pursued by countries in order to allow countries to build on one another's strengths, and tap into the regional support and guidance needed for successful execution of strategies, specifically the implementation of the Community Strategic Plan, over the next 5 years;

Governments should support the development of statistics through the establishment of a Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics (RSDS) (See Specific Action 1C); should support the development of an attachment programme in statistics; should also enable the development of Centres of Excellence (CoE) in NSOs and at the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat; and should facilitate the production of regional public goods in statistics, such as the CARICOM Statistics Model Bill for use by countries. The activities in this action should be over the next five years

Governments should continue to support the production of the indicators for the Caribbean Specific Millennium Development Goals and Targets which should continue to be a critical part of the RSWP even as the focus is now on the Post-2015 Agenda. A regional statistical framework for the Post-2015 era should be supported. This support to the production of the indicators of the CSMDGs and to the development of a statistical framework for the Post-2015 era should be over the next 5 years.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

The **Second High-Level Advocacy Forum on Statistics (HLF2), Strategising for the Development of Statistics in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in the Post-2015 Development Agenda**, was held at the Radisson Grenada Beach Resort, St. George's, Grenada on 26 May 2014. **Dr. The Right Honourable Keith Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada** was the keynote speaker at the Forum.

The Forum requested that the Prime Minister should *“champion the cause of statistics and statisticians at the highest level of the Community with the same verve and vigour that he had infused in leading the Community in the area of Information and Communication Technology”*. The direct response to this request by the Prime Minister was, **“Use me as an advocate of statistics”**, which included his taking up with his fellow Heads of Government the issues and concerns on statistics and actions that can serve to make available statistics for decision-making and for empowering the people of the Region.

The Fifteenth Meeting of the CARICOM Advisory Group on Statistics (AGS) and the Thirty-Ninth Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS), both of which were held in Georgetown, Guyana in October 2014, having considered the Report of the HLF2, decided to prepare a document with concrete proposals which the Prime Minister of Grenada can take to the appropriate Heads of Government meeting. In the section that follows, the Proposals are presented as “Issues” and concomitant “Specific Actions”. Background information on the Overview of the Forum is in the **Annex** to this document.

## 2. PROPOSALS AND SPECIFIC ACTIONS FOR IMPROVING STATISTICS IN CARICOM

The following proposals with specific actions to improve the production of statistics in a cost-effective manner are presented for the consideration of Governments:

### Issue 1:

The strengthening of the National Statistical Systems (NSS) and specifically the National Statistical Offices (NSOs) which are central to the production of official statistics should be pursued by Governments of the Region with respect to the funding of core areas to support the improvement in statistics as follows:

#### A. Staffing Requirements for the implementation of the Regional Statistical Work Programme (RSWP):

- Provision of adequate staff in NSOs and in statistical units in Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) should be addressed by Governments to enable improvement in the production and dissemination of timely, high quality statistics.
- Specifically, the current *staffing structure* of the NSO and the other statistics producing agencies should be *reviewed and rationalised* and the staffing requirements for the production of relevant statistics should be *ascertained*. This review should take into consideration the following:
  - The need to advance implementation of the Common Regional Statistical Work Programme (RSWP) approved by the Community Council in 2005 and updated in 2011;
  - The need also to align the RSWP with national priorities/ statistical work programmes;

- The need for statistics to support the Strategic Plan of the Community; the Samoa Pathway document and the Post-2015 initiative;
- The need to equip staff with IT skills and to achieve efficiency gains in the NSS.

#### **Specific Action in 1A:**

Measures to fill the gap in the required staffing structure on a phased basis should be developed and implemented by Governments over the next 5 -7 years. [See Specific Actions in 1D and 2B on staffing];

The identification of training in statistics for staff of the National Statistical Office (NSO) and in general the National Statistical System (NSS) should be a priority relative to the award of scholarships by Governments/International Development Partners (IDP) - time frame over the next 5 years. [See Specific Action in 3 on tertiary level scholarships to facilitate new entrants into the profession].

#### **B. Transformation of NSOs and Updating of Statistics Legislation:**

Governments must continue to take steps to modernise and transform the NSOs into autonomous bodies which may include the revising/updating of the Statistics Legislation and corresponding regulations using as a basis the **CARICOM Statistics Model Bill** produced under a Regional Public Good (RPG), Inter-American Development Bank-funded project. The Model Bill provides, inter alia, the setting up of an integrated National Statistical System, the form and functions of the NSO, access to administrative data for statistical purposes only and financing of the transformed NSO.

#### **Specific Action in 1B:**

Governments should continue to make efforts to update the Statistics Legislation and corresponding regulations and to enable movement to a transformed, autonomous and impartial NSO within an integrated NSS - timeframe over thenext 2 years.

### **C. Championing of the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS)**

Governments should acknowledge and recognise that statistics are indispensable for development; that the existing national statistical system is sometimes fragile and does not always fully match the demand for statistics; and that it is important to adopt a strategic planning approach, a Strategic Master Plan, to the development of statistics. Such an approach is the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) which is aimed at effecting the change required in the National Statistical Systems (NSS). Fundamentally, a Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics (RSDS) should also be supported. The NSDS should include effective provisions for training including in areas that entail the integrating of IT and Statistics.

#### **Specific Action in 1C:**

Governments should provide support to the launch of the NSDS process in countries where this has not occurred; should also take steps to support the updating and in approving the NSDS designs that have been formulated by countries; and should support the implementation of the NSDS in order to modernise and transform the NSO and the NSS over the next 3 years. A Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics (RSDS) to provide a roadmap for statistical development should also be supported. [See Specific Action in 5].

### **D. Efficiency gains through the sharing of data from Administrative Sources**

Governments of the Region should support the sharing of data from key administrative sources such as from the Value Added Tax (VAT) administration, the Income Tax Department, the Health and Education ministries for the use by the NSOs for *statistical purposes only*. This approach can allow for efficiency gains through making accessible data that are already being collected by the pertinent producing agencies. The upgrading of the Statistics Legislation (Specific Action 1B) and the provision of finance towards its implementation will facilitate this process.

### **Specific Actions in 1D:**

Financial and related support required *to enable efficiency gains in making available administrative data for the production of statistics*, should be provided by Governments. This financial and related support will be for areas such as, staffing requirements to enable data sharing within the NSS; support to enable agreements among relevant administrative data-producing authorities in Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs); Information Technology (IT) data network/equipment to effect data transfer; support for the implementation of the Statistics Legislation and corresponding regulations (Specific Action 1B); and general support to statistical advocacy within the NSS and in countries, over the next 5 years.

### **E. Development/Funding of a Multi-purpose Survey Programme**

It is necessary for Governments to fund a *multi-purpose household and establishment survey programme* which would also result in efficiency gains through the rationalisation of the conduct of surveys that are undertaken within the NSO and across the NSS. A consolidated and rationalised multi-purpose survey programme apart from providing more data in a more cost-effective manner can also reduce the burden on respondents in households and businesses. The funding of the decennial census should also be included in this survey programme.

### **Specific Actions in 1E:**

A Situational Assessment of the current survey programme should be conducted followed by the establishment by Governments of a continuous multi-purpose survey programme in countries where this does not exist or the rationalisation of the programme where it exists, over the next 5-7 years.

## **Issue 2:**

Governments should pursue the upgrading of **the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) base** of the NSO/NSS to enable the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics with greater efficiency.

### **A. Needs Assessment of IT Infrastructure Required to fuel the Data Revolution**

A needs assessment on the use of ICT in statistical data collection, production and dissemination should be undertaken which should be followed by the facilitating/provisioning of the required state-of-the-art computer equipment and software. Cost reductions can be achieved at every stage of the data collection, production and dissemination processes including movement to electronic data collection using tablets in real-time processing or otherwise; efficiency gains in data capture/editing and processing in general; additional efficiency gains through the use of ICT in achieving alignment with the agencies providing administrative data for statistical purposes; the use of ICT in the dissemination of the statistics to users including decision-makers in the public and private sectors. Provision of state-of-the-art IT equipment is a key consideration in addressing the use of ICT in Statistics. Ensuring the incorporation of ICT in the production and dissemination of statistics can result in the following:

- The realisation of greater efficiency in data collection and processing on surveys and censuses;
- Enabling of the sharing of administrative data with greater ease for use in statistics data production;
- More efficient dissemination of statistics including on mobile phones and other similar devices;
- Better targeting of population groups in the dissemination of information e.g. the youths, investors.

### **Specific Actions in 2A:**

The conduct of an IT needs assessment in NSO/NSS should be executed and should be followed by the provision of the requisite state-of-the-art equipment/software for use in statistics data collection, production and dissemination; ; [See Specific Action in 1D on Data Sharing/Transfer]

The production of e-guidelines to encourage greater use of statistics should be enabled;

Youths should be encouraged to develop mobile applications (apps) in statistics;

The training of statisticians as data scientists to make more effective use of IT and Statistics should be enabled.

All of the above should be over a period of 5 years.

### **B. Greater Cost-Effectiveness through positioning of key staff with IT skills:**

NSOs should be equipped by Governments with key staff with the requisite IT skills to support the use of ICT in the processes of statistics data collection, production and dissemination. This would ensure dedicated attention to the activities required relative to the infusion of ICT in the undertakings of the NSO and also enable greater efficiency in the reduction of response times to ICT related issues. The positioning of the key staff within the NSOs is even more critical where the IT services in the public service of some countries are being or have been centralised.

### **Specific Action in 2B:**

Governments should enable the positioning/retention of key staff with IT skills within the NSO including enabling adequate remuneration to encourage a career path for these personnel, over the next 3 years.

### **Issue 3:**

Governments should promote careers in statistics [linked to IT/data scientists] through embedding it as a data science in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools and make available scholarships at the tertiary level to enable specialisation in statistics.

Governments should ensure that Statistics is taught at all educational levels and suitable links with IT and data analysis should be established from the beginning. The artificial division of Statistics, Data Analysis and IT should cease to exist.

### **Specific Action in 3**

Governments should ensure that there are suitable provisions for scholarships at the tertiary level in statistics; that there are training opportunities for prospective entrants; and that statistics, data science, data analysis and IT are included in an integrated manner in the education curricula at all levels, over the next 5 years. [See Specific Action in 1A on scholarships for current staff of the NSO/NSS]

### **Issue 4:**

Governments should endorse and promote the Caribbean Association of Professional Statisticians (CAPS).

Arising out of the first High level Forum of 2009, in which the formation of the Caribbean Association of Professional Statisticians (CAPS) was a recommended outcome, the CAPS was finally launched in October 2013 in Basseterre, St. Kitts and Nevis. The first Board of Directors was established in May 2014 in St. Georges, Grenada. It is well-known that the existence of a well-functioning Professional Association is conducive to the integrity of Official Statistics. Since it is well-acknowledged that **Good Statistics are essential for Good Governance** it is in the interest of all CARICOM Governments to accept, endorse and promote the CAPS. These actions of acceptance, endorsement and promotion should be widely publicised. As part of the promotion, Governments should consider the granting of specific allowances to NSOs and statistical units in MDAs seeking institutional membership in CAPS.

#### **Specific Actions in 4:**

Governments should accept, endorse and promote the Caribbean Association of Professional Statisticians and widely publicise the CAPS, over the next 4 years.

Governments should bear the costs of the membership dues for CAPS (institution-level membership) of the NSO and other data producing units in MDAs that are part of the NSS, over the next 4 years.

In addition Governments can consider the sponsoring of the attendance of at least two representatives from the NSS to attend the annual meeting of the CAPS, for the next 3 years.

#### **Issue 5:**

Governments should support a regional approach to the development of statistics to optimise scarce resources in the strengthening of the NSS.

At this time of unprecedented economic challenges, with very limited and stretched public resources and dwindling grant resources, the necessity for evidence-based policy-making is even more crucial. It is vital that “every development dollar must count- none must be wasted”. Governments and citizens alike need relevant and timely information on which to make decisions. It is clear, even with the best of intentions, that National Statistical Systems are currently not meeting the demands for statistical information. Consequently, there must be **investment in regional approaches that can help to optimise the scarce public resources in individual countries**. The “free movement of people—and of minds—must be **encouraged and entrenched in the sharing of best practices** as the Region continues to confront enormous economic challenges”. Statistical development therefore, should not be static or isolated within individual countries, because the development of statistics is essential to regional and national advancement. The **production of a roadmap for the statistical development** in the Region must be a key result. Fundamentally, **the acceleration of statistical development requires a regional approach**.

### **Specific Actions 5:**

Governments should support and encourage the alignment of the Regional Statistical Work Programme (RSWP) with the strategic objectives currently being pursued by countries in order to allow countries to build on one another's strengths, and tap into the regional support and guidance needed for successful execution of strategies, specifically the implementation of the Community Strategic Plan, over the next 5 years;

Governments should support the development of statistics through the establishment of a Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics (RSDS) (See Specific Action 1C); should support the development of an attachment programme in statistics; should also enable the development of Centres of Excellence (CoE) in NSOs and at the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat; and should facilitate the production of regional public goods in statistics, such as the CARICOM Statistics Model Bill for use by countries. The activities in this action should be over the next five years

Governments should continue to support the production of the indicators for the Caribbean Specific Millennium Development Goals and Targets which should continue to be a critical part of the RSWP even as the focus is now on the Post-2015 Agenda. A regional statistical framework for the Post-2015 era should be supported. This support to the production of the indicators of the CSMDGs and to the development of a statistical framework for the Post-2015 era should be over the next 5 years.

## ANNEX

### OVERVIEW OF THE FORUM

#### 1. MAIN OBJECTIVE AND THE THEME OF FORUM

The main objective of the Forum was to enable high level commitment by Governments of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to invest in statistics for the strengthening of the National Statistical Systems (NSS) to produce high quality data for decision-making and for the empowerment of the people of the Region. Fundamentally, it is envisaged that the availability of statistics would lead to good governance, greater accountability and improved standards of living of the peoples of the Community.

The theme of the Forum was, “**A Data Revolution for Sustainable Development with a new international initiative to improve the quality of statistics and information available to citizens**”. This theme was derived directly from the Report of the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons, established by the United Nations Secretary General to make recommendations beyond 2015. The *Data Revolution* focuses on the need to “take advantage of new technology, crowd sourcing, and improved connectivity to empower people with *information*” on the progress towards development targets.

#### 2. KEY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Forum served to explore the context of the Data Revolution in CARICOM relative to the challenges facing statistics as articulated by countries during the forum. Key issues included the following:

- (i) The need to advocate for investment in statistics at the highest level to fund the Data Revolution;
- (ii) Information and Communication Technology (ICT) must power the Data Revolution;

- (iii) Statistics must be the voice of the people and appropriate and timely statistics must be disseminated to all citizens;
- (iv) Investing in a regional approach would optimise scarce resources and benefit all countries;
- (v) The production of a roadmap for the development of statistics in CARICOM which should be based on a CARICOM Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics (RSDS);
- (vi) Professionalising of statistics through the Caribbean Association of Professional Statisticians (CAPS) which was established in Grenada in May 2014;
- (vii) The championing of the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) framework is fundamental to the developmental of the NSS;
- (viii) There is need for coordination by international development partners in the execution of projects in statistics.

The full summary report and Final Report of the HLF2 have been disseminated to countries and participants of the Forum.



