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REPORT ON ECLAC/CDCC TRAINING WORKSHOP IN EVIDENCE-BASED SOCIAL POLICY FORMULATION FOR THE CARIBBEAN

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REPORT ON ECLAC/CDCC TRAINING WORKSHOP IN EVIDENCE-BASED SOCIAL POLICY FORMULATION FOR THE CARIBBEAN

Introduction

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean/Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (ECLAC/CDCC) secretariat held the second training workshop in evidence-based social policy formulation for Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in Jamaica. The workshop was held during the period 26-28 November 2002 at the Jamaica Hilton and Conference Centre.

The training workshop had two primary objectives, the first being to enhance the skills of senior technocrats in evidence-based social policy formulation, using Caribbean social statistics in a technology-based environment and with a hands-on approach. The other objective was to familiarise participants with the workings of the Caribbean Social Statistical Databases project.

The meeting was attended by 18 senior technocrats who work in the field of social development, drawn from among social planners and senior statisticians, from Anguilla, Barbados, the Bahamas, the British Virgin Islands, Jamaica and the United States Virgin Islands. Also in attendance were staff members of, and Consultants to the Social Development Unit who acted as facilitators. The list of participants is annexed to this report.

Ms Asha Kambon, Social Affairs Unit, ECLAC/CDCC secretariat introduced the concept behind the training workshop to participants and specially invited guests. She explained that for the past two years, and generally speaking for more than five years, the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat had been engaged in putting measures and mechanisms in place which would enable governments in the subregion to meet their stated goals of improved social policies. One of the actions, which the secretariat had undertaken, and of which this training formed a central part, was in the area that was understood to be at the root of social policy problems in the Caribbean - the data. Ms. Kambon further explained that the Social Affairs Unit of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean had embarked on the establishment of fully searchable databases of socio-demographic statistics of all member States in order to address this issue. In that regard, developing partnerships and working in collaboration with governments, other agencies and organizations have been a key process in the undertaking of this project.

The office had proceeded on this task by bringing together experts, through an ad hoc panel, drawn from academic institutions, United Nations agencies, statistical organizations and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat. The purpose of this process was to ensure that:

(a) Key stakeholders in the subregion who were involved in the collection, storage, dissemination and use of social statistics would be informed of the operations of the project;

(b) The project could benefit from a broad interdisciplinary team of experts who would critique and lend shape to its design and implementation; and

(c) A truly collaborative framework would be established for continued work.

Ms. Kambon reported that many ECLAC member States had been visited, five ad hoc advisory committee meetings had been held and the project could declare that it had succeeded in creating the databases which was its primary mandate. She stated that the training component of our task was meant to give to social planners and statisticians hands-on experience, using the databases, in the formulation of evidence-based social policy. She expressed the expectation that at its conclusion, the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat would be able to report to its stakeholders that it had met and exceeded their expectations.

The keynote speakers at the opening of the training workshop were Dr. Peter John Gordon of the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), and Ms. Roslyn Hazelle of the Ministry of Community and Social Development and Gender Affairs of St. Kitts and Nevis.

According to Dr. Gordon, evidence-based social policy formulation was important because it allowed for the objective assessments of policies and their outcomes. In so doing, policy makers would be more able to address social policy issues objectively. Dr. Gordon urged participants to address issues of social policy “from the head and not the heart.”

Ms. Hazelle addressed participants on the topic of "Social Policy in assisting countries to meet the Millennium Goals". In setting the context for her concern about the need for countries in the Caribbean to be able to meet the millennium goals, Ms. Hazelle informed participants that world leaders and senior government officials had assembled at the United Nations Millennium Summit to examine overall growth and development and the general state of the world. She explained that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) represented our leaders' commitment to improving the social and human development of all global citizens by the year 2015, in areas such as poverty,

reduction in the incidence of HIV/AIDS, gender equality, maternal health, environmental sustainability and universal access to education. Although achieving the set targets might seem insurmountable and overly ambitious, Ms. Hazelle posited that the opportunities for SIDS, such as ours, could be greatly enhanced through the proper development and implementation of social policy designed to meet these specific goals and the needs of the subregion's citizens.

She outlined several important approaches that were necessary for the formulation of targeted social policies designed to meet the MDGs. Very important to this process was the identification of indicators in order for policy makers to effectively monitor the success and failure of policies. Ms. Hazelle expressed the opinion that such workshops provided opportunities for senior technocrats to be exposed to new skills and ideas, to develop working relationships locally and regionally and, most importantly, to analyze social policy formulation in the subregion and the way forward into the new millennium.

The agenda of the training workshop proceeded with exploration of the following thematic areas:

1. Social policy in the Caribbean, its history and development.

2. Social data in the Caribbean: what exists, what are the priorities?

3. Using social statistics for evidence-based social policy formulation

Agenda item 1:
Social policy in the Caribbean, its history and development

Dr. Dennis Brown, Lecturer, University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine, Trinidad, provided a historical context for social policy in the Caribbean, identifying in his presentation, the important factors that went into the shaping of the social policy environment in the Caribbean. He explained that social policy was one means of ensuring that some of the economic surplus generated by members of the society was used in the maintenance of the general welfare of the population. He noted, however, that there was likely to be debate about what those standards were and how best to attain them. The immediate circumstance of the society, its culture, values, and historical traditions would, according to Dr. Brown, frame the debate in this regard. In his presentation, he identified current key social issues in the subregion and critiqued the policy measures that had been implemented to deal with these social issues, especially those responses, which he described as having an excessive degree of bureaucratic paternalism. During his presentation, Dr. Brown also outlined what he thought were more positive alternative responses

to the top-down approach involved in social policy formulation and recommended more participatory approaches.

Participants' responses to Dr. Brown's presentation included discussion on best practices of collecting data to inform social policy, as well as some of the obstacles (such as survey fatigue) that increased the level of difficulty in the collection of such data. Participants took advantage of the opportunity to discuss a number of practical issues in social policy formulation with which they were faced in the conduct of their jobs, and the possible ways of dealing with these issues.

Following the discussion of the evolution and history of social policy in the Caribbean, country delegations were invited to make their presentations. Each country delegation had been asked to prepare a case study to describe social policy in their country, with reference to a specific issue; to examine the development and implementation of the case selected; highlight best practices; address lessons that could be learned from the process; and discuss difficulties or constraints to the process. Actual presentations are annexed to the report for easy reference. Table 1 below details the country presentation thus providing a schematic overview of the information presented to the workshop.

Table 1. Social policy issues as presented by participating countries.

PRESENTATION	**COUNTRY**
Overview of Social Policy: Care of the Child	Anguilla
Unemployment Assistance Work Programme	The Bahamas
Social Policy in Barbados: Poverty Eradication Initiatives	Barbados
Domestic Violence Policy	British Virgin Islands
National Youth Policy: A Jamaican case study	Jamaica
Tourism in the USVI	United States Virgin Islands

Agenda item 2:
Social data in the Caribbean: what exists, what are the priorities?

Dr. Godfrey St Bernard, Research Fellow, Sir Arthur Lewis Institute for Social and Economic Research, spoke about the state of data in the areas of domestic violence and presented the work carried out in developing a protocol for the collection of data in the area of domestic violence.

In highlighting the protocol, Dr. St. Bernard explained that it was intended to obtain a profile of the victims of domestic violence as well as of the perpetrators. He also explained that it was the objective of this protocol to understand the frequency and incidence of domestic violence; identify the groups at risk; develop intervention programmes; and monitor the effectiveness of violence prevention and intervention activities.

Dr. St Bernard, in his presentation, outlined some of the conceptual issues and analytical challenges faced in the development and implementation of the domestic violence protocol. This included the definition of domestic violence itself; obstacles to the data collection process, including issues of confidentiality; and the need to ensure data quality. He concluded that the countries in the Caribbean subregion were at different levels of readiness to implement the proposed data collection system, but that the issue was of such significance that it was important that countries explore the prospects of enhancing their capacities to accommodate the system.

Ms. Kristin Fox, Director, Derek Gordon Databank, made a presentation on the purpose and work of the Databank. She explained that the consolidation of critical, social and economic data was one of the main objectives of the databank. This, it was expected, would allow for easy access to the data by experts and students in the university and the subregion, as a whole, for comparative analysis and graduate training in quantitative social science methodologies. Ms. Fox, however, pointed to some limitations being faced by the data bank in the accessing and use of regional data. These included the high cost of datasets, which limited the ability of the bank to obtain them and inadequate documentation of data sets.

She also indicated that there were a number of constraints imposed by the owners of the datasets, which limited the databank's ability to obtain the data. The primary reason for constraints, in this regard, was the fear of the owners that improper use and understanding of the datasets would lead to incorrect conclusions and undermine the credibility of the owners. Ms. Fox informed participants that the main priority of the data bank at this time was to improve collaboration with the owners and generators of data in the Caribbean, as well as to expand the current database to include more datasets from other Caribbean territories. The Derek Gordon Databank was reported to have one statistical analyst and a computer lab technician on staff, with 24 computers and peripherals and a website http://salises.uwimona.edu.jm:1104.

The presentations by Dr. St. Bernard and Ms. Fox were followed by a general discussion of the state of the social statistical holdings of the countries represented at the training workshop. Anguilla reported that it was in the process of compiling a database of statistics in the Department of Social Development. The Bahamas representatives informed participants that the Labour Force Survey, which had traditionally been conducted in only the two major islands of the Bahamas will, as of 2002, be extended to the 'family islands' on an annual basis and its Poverty Survey has been completed. The Bahamas also reported that its Population Census for 2000 has been completed and data from its Urban Renewal Project can be linked with data from the Population Census. This country plans to put out a series of monographs dealing with issues arising out of the population census. The Bahamas also pointed to the fact that births found in their vital statistics are

based on occurrences rather than the registration of births in the Grand Bahama. Also, published education data are not disaggregated by sex, since, although the raw data are available, the personnel are not presently available to spend the time on the analysis of this data.

Barbados pointed to similar problems in the area of availability of personnel to conduct extensive analysis of data collected. The representatives of this country reported that they are in the process of putting their data on the internet with help from ECLAC. They are also linking their labour force survey with the population census. In the area of crime data and education data, there is a problem accessing the data from the respective ministries and this prevents the optimum use and analysis of the information that resides in these domains.

Agenda item 3:
Using social statistics for evidence-based social policy formulation

The Chairperson of the session's proceedings began the day's activities with a general discussion of the previous day's presentations. All participants agreed that there was a need for a high level of sensitization of their societies to the importance and necessity of data collection, the creation of databases and collaboration among all ministries and agencies involved in the collection of social statistics.

Dr. Godfrey St Bernard delivered his lecture on the use of social statistics for evidence-based social policy formulation and analysis. He identified the primary characteristics that social indicators ought to possess. He explained that they should be **specific, measurable, appropriate, realistic and time-bound.** Adherence to these characteristics would go a long way in ensuring the kind of indicators that could be used in evidence-based social policy formulation. He went on to discuss with participants important principles in the analysis of data and also demonstrated the usefulness of statistical software, specifically SPSS, in such exercises. Dr. St. Bernard emphasised the importance of analysing not only the major categories but also subgroups within the data in order to better understand the phenomena under analysis. According to Dr. St Bernard, occurrences which have no impact at the national level may have tremendous impact at the sub-national level.

The presentation on the use of social statistics was followed by an introduction to the ECLAC/CDCC Social Statistical databases. Ms Asha Kambon shared with the participants, background information on the genesis of the project, as well as the objectives, justification and future plans, while acknowledging the generous sponsorship of the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

In addition to the background of the project, IT Consultant, Mr. Kerwyn Roach, exposed participants to some of the technical aspects of the creation of the databases. In his presentation, he pointed to some of the issues related to the cleaning and processing of datasets that posed some difficulties in the construction of the databases. This was followed by a presentation by Ms. Lynette Joseph-Brown of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat on some of the issues of data analysis arising out of the problems identified in the datasets. The full presentation is annexed to this report.

These presentations generated discussion, with participants calling for more feedback when data was used for analysis to facilitate improvement in the availability and quality of the required data. In this regard, it was noted that a greater sharing of datasets with researchers in the subregion was required. Statisticians indicated their willingness to revisit their datasets, if necessary, to correct problems identified, based on feedback received.

Participants were then introduced to the next phase of the training workshop – the assignments. The facilitator presented the group assignment and the participants were formed into multidisciplinary and cross-cultural groups.

Participants worked in their respective groups to define a social policy problem and put into practice what they had learnt about the use of data for evidence-based social policy formulation. They were required to develop policy recommendations arising out of their findings. Each group undertook the assignment and made a 7 to10-minute presentation of their findings and recommendations. The presentations are annexed to this report.

At the end of the workshop, participants were asked to evaluate their experiences at the workshop. A full evaluation is annexed to this report. There was overwhelming consensus among participants on the need for more workshops on social policy formulation. There were also many requests for SPSS training. Many participants felt that the training would impact positively, not only on their current work, but on future projects that they were going to undertake.

Ms. Pauline Knight, Director, Social and Manpower Planning Division, Planning Institute of Jamaica, participated in the closing ceremony in which each participant was presented with a certificate of participation. Ms. Knight thanked ECLAC for undertaking this training workshop and remarked on the energy and enthusiasm that she observed in the participants. She expressed the desire for more training in this area, pointing to the need for the skills that were being developed. Participants were also thanked for their thorough preparation as evidenced in their various presentations, as well as for their very lively and enthusiastic participation in the workshop. The meeting closed with the usual exchange of courtesies.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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Annex II

ECLAC/CDCC PRESENTATIONS

Annex III

COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS

Annex IV

EVALUATION REPORT

EVALUATION OF SECOND ECLAC/CDCC TRAINING WORKSHOP ON EVIDENCE-BASED SOCIAL POLICY FORMULATION FOR CARIBBEAN SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS)

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean/Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (ECLAC/CDCC) secretariat convened the second training workshop in evidence-based social policy formulation for Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in Jamaica. The workshop was conducted at the Jamaica Hilton and Conference centre from 26 – 28 November 2002

Participants for the training workshop were senior technocrats who work in the field of social development, drawn from among social planners and senior statisticians, from Anguilla, the Bahamas, Barbados, the British Virgin Islands, Jamaica and the United States Virgin Islands. At the end of the workshop, participants were given questionnaires and asked to evaluate their experiences.

What were your expectations of the workshop?

Training in the identification of indicators, as well as training in data analysis for social policy formulation were the responses that were most often given when participants were asked what were their expectations of the workshop. This was closely followed by the expectation that participants would be given additional insight into what evidence-based social policy formulation was all about.

Table 1: Expectations of the workshop

Expectations	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Training in the identification of indicators and data analysis for social policy formulation	9	52.9
More insight into evidence-based social policy formulation	3	17.6
To learn more about the social statistical databases	1	5.9
Training in SPSS	1	5.9
Other/Not stated	3	17.6
Total	17	100.0

Did the workshop meet your expectations?

The workshop met the expectations of the majority of the participants (56.3%). Twenty five percent of the participants reported that the workshop exceeded their expectations, while 19% said that the workshop partially met their expectations.

Table 2: Did the workshop meet your expectations?

Degree to which expectations were met	Frequency	Percentage
Exceeded expectations	4	25
Met expectations	9	56.3
Met expectations partially	3	18.8
Total	16	100

Table 3: Are there any expectations that were not met?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
No	11	64.7
Yes	3	17.6
Not Stated	3	17.6
Total	17	100

Eighteen percent of the participants said that some of their expectations were not met. The participants whose expectations were only partially met wanted more exposure to social policy formulation and actual training in SPSS.

To what extent was the material presented at the workshop useful to your current and future work?

Most of the participants felt that the material presented was useful to both their current and future work, with responses ranging from very useful to somewhat useful. None of the participants felt that the material presented was not useful to their present or future work.

Table 4: To what extent was the material useful to your current work?

Usefulness	Frequency	Percentage
Very useful	9	52.9
Useful	6	35.3
Somewhat useful	2	11.8
Total	17	100

Table 5: To what extent was the material useful to your future work?

Usefulness	Frequency	Percentage
Very useful	9	52.9
Useful	7	41.2
Somewhat useful	1	5.9
Total	17	100

How adequate was the material presented?

Most participants felt that the material presented was 'just enough'. Some felt however that the material presented was too much, while others felt that it was not enough. Some of the comments in this regard, are presented in Box 1.

Table 6: To what extent was the material presented adequate

Adequacy of material	Frequency	Percentage
Too much	1	6.3
Just enough	13	81.3
Not enough	2	12.5
Total	16	100

Box 1: Comments on adequacy of material presented

1. Not being a statistician, some of the information was too much, but because we worked in groups and were able to share our knowledge with each other, it made the material more meaningful.

2. Did not have enough time to read all of the material, but feel excited at the themes involved.

3. The material that was not covered in the presentations was supplemented with the extensive collection of handouts given.

4. Needed more examples of policy problems across territories and how statistical manipulation was used to isolate and identify problems to come up with policy recommendations.

5. Although there was a great deal of material presented, it was manageable in the time frame of the workshop.

6. While the presentations were interesting, it used a lot of time leaving less time to focus on what I considered to be the two main requirements for the focal groups. These were: (a) for statisticians to be able to collate, extrapolate and analyse data; and (b) for planners to analyse data (or at least understand how to formulate appropriate policy.

Are there any areas covered in the workshop for which you wish to have further training?

Training in SPSS as well as in social policy formulation were the two overwhelmingly popular responses of participants when asked to identify areas in which they would like to have further training. Other responses included interest in training in data collection methods, survey design and data

processing, as well as further statistical training and computer literacy for statisticians.

Table 7: Any other areas for further training

Expectations	Number of responses	Percentage of responses	Percentage of cases
Social Policy formulation	13	32.5	76.5
Training in SPSS	14	35.0	82.4
Further statistical training	4	10.0	23.5
Computer literacy for statisticians	4	10.0	23.5
Data collection methods	3	7.5	17.6
Survey Design	2	5.0	11.8
Total	40	100.0	235.3

How did the logistics affect the training workshop?

An equal percentage of participants felt that the logistics of the workshop enriched the training process or adequately supported the process.

Table 8: How would you assess the logistics of the workshop?

Adequacy of material	Frequency	Percentage
Enriched the training	8	47.1
Adequately supported the process	8	47.1
Not stated	1	5.9
Total	17	100

General Comments

Participants were given an opportunity in the evaluation of the training workshop to make general comments. Participants were unanimous in their appreciation of obtaining the opportunity to be exposed to this training. Many expressed a desire to see the training workshops continue. The training team was also complimented on the support given to participants. See Box 2 for further comments.

Box 2 – General Comments from participants concerning workshop

1. A wonderful exercise. Follow-up training is expected in at least six months.

2. I was grateful for the 'hands on' approach. Too often a lot of theory is given with no room for application of what was learnt. Staff was knowledgeable and helpful.

3. My educational background is in psychology and human resource development. I have only been employed in a social policy formulation context for a short time, therefore this workshop serves a very 'practical' orientation for me as newcomer. I have been informed and sensitized to some key issues in this field. Above all it has reinforced the need for policy recommendations to be supported by empirical data vs emotion or convenience.

4. It is hoped that this effort will be sustained especially for statisticians who tend to not use data for policy formulation.

5. The sessions for lecture discussions were a bit long.

6. The workshop was timely and interesting. It would be good if follow-up workshops (checking progress and implementation of techniques) can be arranged.

7. This was quite insightful and enlightening. We were made aware not only of the data collection systems in each country, but also the actual social situations prevailing in these countries.

8. There should have been some time allowed for sightseeing. The information was very helpful and the presenters were knowledgeable about their areas and presented the information clearly. Thanks for the opportunity.

9. We missed the participation of the Statistical Institute of Jamaica. Assignments should have been given out on the first day.

10. The workshop has been very informative and enlightening. However, there is a need for further and more frequent training of persons in the social statistics area.

11. I am very grateful to ECLAC and the other organisations that collaborated in putting together this workshop. The areas that were covered are extremely relevant to my occupation. However, a workshop such as this could have been extended by an extra day to really cement the areas of focus.