



Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean

Report of the First Meeting of the Steering Committee
Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
3 February 2009

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**REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON
STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF NATIONAL STATISTICAL OFFICES
(NSOS) IN THE CARIBBEAN SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES TO FULFIL
THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS) AND OTHER
INTERNATIONALLY AGREED DEVELOPMENT GOALS (IADG)**

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Introduction

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, convened a half day expert group meeting within the framework of the United Nations Development Account funded project ‘Strengthening the Capacity of National Statistical Offices in the Caribbean Small Island Developing States to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs)’, in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on 3 February 2009.

This meeting was convened to establish a Steering Committee for the project under discussion and to discuss the way forward for the first phase of its implementation based on the findings of the preceding expert group meeting.

Agenda item 1: Opening session

The meeting was opened by Ms. Karoline Schmid, Social Affairs Officer and project coordinator, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean. She welcomed the members of the Steering Committee and expressed her appreciation for their willingness to support and guide the implementation of the project. Invitations were sent to all agencies as requested by the project document, as follows: the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). The project coordinator also extended an invitation to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and to an independent expert to join the Steering Committee. Apologies were received from the UNSD, the UNDP and CARICOM. An official from the Statistics Division of ECLAC Headquarters participated via teleconference.

The Terms of Reference (TORs) for the work of the Steering Committee were shared with the participants. (See annex III).

Agenda Item 2: Discussion of the findings of the expert group meeting

The ECLAC representative provided a brief presentation on the major objectives and expected outcomes of the project under discussion. She further highlighted the most important findings and conclusions reached at the expert group meeting, held on 2 February 2009, to set the stage for the discussions on the further implementation of the project.

Agenda item 3: Conclusions and recommendations for project implementation

The members of the Steering Committee agreed on the following conceptual strategy to guide the implementation of the project:

(a) The results of the surveys undertaken by the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean among Caribbean National Statistical Offices (NSOs) should be converted into an electronic database. This would provide an overview of the status of the monitoring and reporting of MDGs and IADGs at the country level;

(b) It was further agreed that given a response rate of slightly over 50%, more member States of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) should be encouraged to participate in the survey;

(c) Based on the findings of the survey concerning the extent of the data collection and reporting of the MDGs and IADGs, a minimum of six countries with data for selected indicators will be approached to identify currently applied concepts and definitions. In a further step an effort will be undertaken to streamline and harmonize such concepts. The Steering Committee noted that consensus among Caribbean countries concerning harmonization of definitions and concepts, along with the adoption of common protocols for data collection, analysis and dissemination had already been reached in selected areas, for example, in the area of labour statistics (ILO) and selected social indicators (CARICOM). The Steering Committee further recommended seeking information to this effect from CARICOM, ILO and other relevant regional partners, particularly the Support to Poverty Assessment and Reduction in the Caribbean (SPARC).

(d) Discussing the conceptual approach outlined by the Statistics Division of ECLAC Headquarters that was applied in a similarly structured Development Account-funded project 'MDG statistics capacity-building' (2005/2008), the Steering Committee decided to adopt a similar approach:

- Inclusion of a wider group of stakeholders, apart from staff of NSOs, relevant line ministries and other national data producing agents, such as research institutions and/governmental research bodies;
- The provision of thematic training workshops designed to build capacity in the identified areas (through survey, desk research and expert group meetings): education, gender, poverty and environment. The Steering Committee further recommended seeking collaboration from other substantive ECLAC Divisions and relevant United Nations agencies to support training in the areas of gender, poverty and environment. In the area of education, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) could provide the required support; and
- Countries were also encouraged to propose additional national indicators considered relevant, for inclusion in the list of MDGs indicators.

The selection of participating countries was approached by the Santiago project as follows: Letters of invitation to participate in the project were sent to all member States and the selection criteria were as follows: (a) the country did not receive any other technical assistance from ECLAC at the point in time; (b) the country must express serious commitment to work with the project and possibly indicate an anticipated outcome of the project intervention, such as a national MDGs report; (c) country teams need to be willing and able to participate in national activities carried out by the project; (d) the country needs to provide evidence concerning long-term sustainability of project activities undertaken; and (e) more developed countries were also approached to either co- or fully fund project activities undertaken in the country. This approach should also be applied when selecting countries to be included in this project

The Steering Committee decided to apply a similar approach to the one presented by the representative of ECLAC Headquarters. Of critical importance in the selection of the country was the expression of its willingness to share data and information with other countries in the region and regional and international development partners.

Agenda Item 4: Development of a work plan for 2009

The Steering Committee deferred the development of a work plan and the finalization of the selection of the participating countries to its next consultations.

The Committee is scheduled to meet again in the third or fourth week of February. It was hoped that at this meeting absent members, CARICOM and SPARC, would be able to join to enhance communication amongst the major regional actors and coordination of their respective activities in providing technical assistance to Caribbean countries.

Annex I**Programme**Tuesday 3 February 2009

1.00 – 1.45 p.m.	Item 1:	<i>Opening Session</i>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome by the Director, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean • Adoption of TORs for SC
1.45 – 3.00 p.m.	<u>Item 2:</u>	<i>Discussion of Findings of Expert Group meeting</i>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of the findings of the expert group meeting <i>Karoline Schmid, ECLAC</i>
3.00 – 3.15 p.m.	<i>Coffee Break</i>	
3.45 – 4.30 p.m.	<u>Item 3:</u>	<i>Conclusions and recommendation for project implementation</i>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection of countries • Identification and determination of specific areas of assistance • Development of a work plan for 2009

Annex II

List of participants

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Annex III

Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee Strengthening the Capacity of National Statistical Offices in the Caribbean Small Island Developing States to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs)

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean has received funding for a project to strengthen national capacities to monitor MDGs and other IADGs in the Caribbean. On completion, it is anticipated that Governments will be in a better position to measure progress towards these goals and to identify gaps in their achievement. This enhanced and continued monitoring will provide the tools necessary for effective and efficient policy planning and the development of appropriate programmatic interventions.

Since the outreach of the project is regional, its successful implementation will depend heavily on regional cooperation and partnerships as well as on technical guidance from regional and international experts.

In order to solicit input from the above cited sources, ECLAC wishes to establish a Steering Committee (SC) with the following main responsibilities:

- Provide overall guidance to the execution and implementation of the project;
- Provide guidance to various technical and substantive aspects of the project;
- Ensure that the project will build on existing initiatives and to avoid duplication of efforts;
- Provide guidance on the feasibility of the project and provide advice on needs for adjustments/amendments to the project to ensure its successful implementation; and
- Provide guidance in the selection of participating countries.

The SC is expected to communicate on an ongoing basis making use of online and/or tele-/videoconferencing modalities. Due to financial limitations only one face-to-face meeting of all members is to be convened in early 2009 (possibly early February).