

CARIFORUM INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND STATISTICAL CAPACITY BUILDING

Proposals for a project to be funded by the European Development Fund in the Framework of the 9th Caribbean Regional Indicative Programme¹

1. Rationale

The Caribbean Forum of ACP States (CARIFORUM) is the partner of the European Union for development cooperation in the Caribbean. CARIFORUM comprises all CARICOM Member States, with the exception of Montserrat, plus the Dominican Republic and Cuba, the latter having adhered in October 2001. CARIFORUM has responsibilities for the management of Caribbean Regional Financial Resources provided by the EU under the Caribbean Regional Indicative Programme (CRIP) of the 9th EDF and Intra-ACP resources.

The aim of the current CRIP, signed between CARIFORUM and the EC, is the beneficial integration of the Caribbean into the world economy through a global repositioning aimed at achieving sustainable growth, regional cohesion and sustainability and continued improvements in living conditions.

The Caribbean Community has taken dramatic steps to strengthen regional integration mainly through the establishment of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and the creation of a Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ). The application of the revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, as well as the compliance with other commitments taken in the international and hemispheric environments, crucially calls for the availability of quality information on the production and movements of goods and services, as well as on the stocks and flows of capital and labour within the region and, considering more specifically the flows, between the region and the rest of the world. Statistics are therefore viewed as a key instrument for the monitoring of the regional integration process and the positioning of the region into the world economy, a particular attention being given to the harmonization of norms, methods and concepts as well as to the production of a core set of pertinent monitoring indicators. This view for the role of statistics is fundamentally shared by the European Union and its willingness to support statistical capacity building is explicitly reflected in the Regional Strategy Paper and Regional Indicative Program for the period 2003-2007.

2. Sector context

The quality of statistics (defined in terms of relevance, accuracy, timeliness, coherence, accessibility and interpretability) produced by the statistical systems in the region is in general deficient. Key economic data, necessary for the development of regional policies and the monitoring of regional integration, are in many cases not available or inadequate for usage. Regionally, large differences in availability and quality of economic statistics occur from country to country.

Systematic programming of statistical activities (medium/short term with clear customer focus) is either absent or needs substantial improvement. In the countries, where other institutions than the Central Statistical Office or the Central Bank compile at least a part of the economic statistics (decentralized statistical systems), the coordination of the systems at the national level is in general less optimally organized.

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First steps in the realization of interregional harmonization of statistical concepts and methodologies, in line with internationally accepted norms and standards, are already taken, but have not yet led to wide-scale realizations.

The efficiency of statistical processing is in many countries weak (insufficient usage of available technologies) and the final products are not disseminated in a professional, modern and user friendly, way. The sub-optimal reputation of the statistical organizations at the national level is in many cases caused by the way of external presentation and the absence of professional image building.

The national statistical systems in all countries are confronted with a shortage on resources with respect to the staffing (in the qualitative and quantitative sense), technical infrastructure, office environment, and financial means, which to a certain extent may be contributed to the social and political perception of statistics. Recently, however, new impulses could be observed because of growing interest in Millennium development Goal Reporting. The area of economic statistics could well use this momentum to generate more resources.

Many countries are experiencing problems with the out flux of recently recruited, young, higher educated staff which in many cases due to the social status of work in statistical offices, the limited career possibilities and the lack on intellectual challenges offered to this category of employees.

Regional thinking at the CARIFORUM level in the national statistical systems is, despite of clear appreciation for the activities of the CARICOM Secretariat in the field of statistics, in general latent and national priorities are, certainly for the moment being, likely to prevail, for a substantial part also due to the lack on resources for a more intensive participation in regional coordination and harmonization.

The CARICOM Secretariat has primary responsibilities for the production, compilation, analysis and distribution of regional statistics in CARIFORUM. It is, however, restricted in the conduct of its tasks and pursuit of its mandate by its own limited institutional capacity.

3. Project details

The overall objective of the project is to contribute to the establishment and the well functioning of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) by providing the decision-makers of the CARIFORUM with quality information to monitor and to guide progress in its establishment and strengthening.

The project intends to address the lack on reliable, harmonized and consolidated key economic statistics in the region and the need for user-friendly access and dissemination mechanisms for these data at the regional and national level.

The stakeholders of the project are at two inter-related levels:

- the regional one, this including the CARIFORUM, the CARICOM, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and potentially other regional agencies,
- the national one, this including the statistical offices and other data users and producers in the member countries of the CARIFORUM, except Cuba.

The project envisages to stimulate and invite all stakeholders to participate in the various activities to be undertaken by introduction of shared ownership and consequently shared responsibility.

The project has an operational duration of 3 years, preceded by a start-up phase of 6 months and a closing phase of 3 months (evaluation and audits).

The collection of activities, as proposed for the project, aims to set the technical and organizational conditions for better regional cooperation and more

harmonization while at the same time strengthening the statistical capacities and improving the availability and quality of statistics.

The strategy selected is:

- (i) To create a regional organizational and technical infrastructure for communication, exchange and distribution with respect to methodological and statistical information between the main stakeholders in the region
- (ii) To develop, implement and document (via directed action plans in emerging areas related to the programming, production and distribution of economic statistics) harmonized concepts and methodologies whilst at the same time realizing substantial improvements in the quality and availability of the statistics concerned
- (iii) To strengthen additionally the statistical capacities in the region by facilitating management seminars, training abroad and study tours, and
- (iv) To sensitize the partners of the statistical systems on the importance of statistics in order to set the pre-conditions for increased usage of statistics and higher resource contributions.

Ad (i) Organizational and technical infrastructure

Organizational infrastructure

A Steering Committee for overall coordination and determination of priorities will be erected with representatives of the CARIFORUM and CARICOM Secretariat, the EC Delegation in Guyana, Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians and the Programme Management Team.

A Programme Management Team (PMT) will be installed for the duration of the project at the CARICOM Secretariat, composed out of a Programme Director, a Senior Technical Advisor Economic Statistics, a Project Leader with knowledge about EDF procedures, a Statistician and a Project Secretary. The roles of the PMT are to initialize and coordinate the various project activities, to support the development of methodologies and standards, to manage and upload the databases with economic indicators and to provide direct support to the stakeholders.

Technical infrastructure

The technical infrastructure consists of two components. The first one is the set up a web-enabled communication infrastructure (hardware and software to be installed in all countries) that will enable the stakeholders in the project to:

- Follow and participate in Discussion Forums (inclusive the access to the Help-desk of the project)
- Upload, consult and download documentation and applications stored in the Documentary Service, like:
 - Meeting reports
 - Methodological guidelines and classifications (inclusive related meta data and conversion schemes)
 - Software applications inclusive documentation (developed by the project or freeware, like those made available by stakeholders or international organizations)
 - Training materials developed during the project
 - Documentation with respect to national practices in so far as relevant for the project
- Transfer of national statistical data for inclusion in the central data bases
- Consult the central databases.

The second component is the review and redesign of database applications for storage and access of statistical indicators. The objectives of this component are:

- To optimize the upload and accessibility of the regional indicators stored at the CARICOM Secretariat with inclusion of web-enabled dynamic database access and display of data bases on the techniques of Geographic Information Systems
- To provide member states with similar tools for the dissemination of their national data.

The deliverables of this component are:

- A study reviewing the existing technical constructions of the statistical databases at the CARICOM Secretariat in line with the updated user requirements as defined by the project
- A study reviewing existing (freeware) applications for dissemination of statistical data (like DevInfo, CPro, Redatam, CARIBINFO, StatLine)
- The redesign of the statistical database applications at the CARICOM Secretariat with preference for usage of existing applications and solutions that are portable to the member states
- The provision of tools to member states for electronic publishing based on the studies and redesigns carried out for the CARICOM Secretariat; if requested by member states, these tools will include the design and installation of a centralized web-hosting service at the CARICOM Secretariat.

Ad (ii) Development, implementation and publication of harmonized concepts and methodologies.

A substantial part of the activities in the project will be realized via a set of short-term, structured, action plans: the CARIFORUM Economic Statistics Action Plans (CESAPs). The CESAPs are based on the following principles:

- Quick development of harmonized and documented methodologies, standards, classifications and guidelines in the areas of management, programming and production of (economic) statistics in the region
- Immediate implementation in the countries of either new statistical observations and methodologies or improvements of existing systems, as pilots for the region and as test of the systems developed, with full direct support from the project structure
- Creation of optimal conditions for sustainability of the systems by direct involvement and shared ownership and responsibility of the countries that participate in the CESAPs
- Parallel training and capacity building of the national and regional staff involved in the development and implementation.
- Optimal usage and further empowerment of the human potentiality available in the region, forging of regional partnerships between statisticians from the various countries and fostering the interest and motivation with respect to employment in statistics.

A standard working model for a CESAP would be the following (the specific characteristics of the areas to be covered and the specificities of participating countries will require further tailoring):

- *Pre-CESAP phase (3 months):*
 - Nomination of participating counties; condition for participation is a strong, and documented commitment to make staff free for active participation and to implement the systems that will be developed.

- Selection of lead-organization or lead-country that will chair the meetings, host the workshops and accommodate the short-term Statistical Advisor and Attached National Expert.
 - Recruitment of a short-term Statistical Advisor (75 working days) and Attached National Expert (9months).
 - Set-up of a web-enabled discussion forum and documentary service for access to project documentation and relevant other source material (like international guidelines, classifications, study reports etc.)
- CESAP Introduction phase (3 months):
 - Draft of guidelines by the short-term Statistical Adviser in cooperation with the PMT for the preliminary national project designs of the participating countries. Each design should include a description of the existing situation, the targeted national and regional results of the interventions of the CESAP and proposals for the phasing and approaches of the works to be realized.
 - Draft of the national project designs by the participating countries with support from the short-term Statistical Adviser and the PMT.
 - Organization of a workshop in which the national project designs will be presented and reviewed and that will culminate into accepted and coordinated national project designs.
 - CESAP Development phase (3 months):
 - Development of systems according the national project designs with assistance of the short-term Statistical Adviser and the assigned Attached National Expert. The short-term Statistical Adviser provides, where necessary, in situ on-the-job training and/or advisory services. The Attached National Expert is primarily responsible for source studies, uploads of the web-enabled documentary service, the moderation of the web-enabled discussion forum.
 - CESAP Implementation phase (3 months):
 - Implementation at the country level of the developed systems with direct support of the PMT and the Attached National Expert and on-distance support of the short-term Statistical Adviser.
 - Organization of concluding workshop in which the experiences from the national project designs will be presented and reviewed. The workshop is expected to culminate into agreed recommendations on regional harmonization and standardization with respect to the area of the CESAP.

The areas to be dealt with into the various CESAPs will be decided by the Steering Committee in consultation with the members of the SCCS and in line with the priorities as agreed upon at the regional level. The project will accommodate a maximum of 9 CESAPs among which one is proposed to deal with Statistical Programming and another with Statistical Dissemination (output data bases, electronic publishing via Internet and CD-Rom, Geographical Information Systems).

It is proposed to have the CESAPs successively started with a time lag of 3 months. Consequence is that the number of active CESAPs during the duration of the project never exceeds three.

The principle is that participation in a certain CESAP is on a voluntary base for the member states. A prerequisite is however that the member state commits

itself to implement the methodologies and standards that are developed in the course of the CESAP. The documented knowledge that will be built up during these processes will be beneficial for the member states who did not participate in specific CESAPs, but who have to comply –on a somewhat longer term- with the regional requirements of transfers of statistical data.

The advantage of the proposed solution is that simultaneously will be addressed (a) the lack on harmonized methodologies and standards, (b) the unavailability of statistical data for surveillance and (c) the deficiencies in statistical capabilities of the national statistical systems. The direct involvement and shared ownership of the countries guarantee optimal conditions for sustainability. The CESAPs stimulate and empower the human potentiality available in the region, forging at the same time regional partnerships between statisticians and fostering the interest and motivation with respect to employment in statistics.

Ad (iii) Complementary capacity building activities.

Three management seminars for the heads of the Statistical Offices will be organized in connection with the mid-year meetings of the Steering Committee in order to discuss common management issues. Furthermore funds will be made available for participation to external training courses and seminars and for the organization of field study tours to Europe.

Ad (iv) Sensitize the partners of the statistical systems on the importance of statistics.

The project will mobilize the necessary expertise to formulate and implement regional and national information programs to sensitize decision-makers on the importance and the complexity of the statistical work. This will be done while emphasizing particularly on the resources needed for a production that meets international standards in terms of quality, comparability, pertinence, reliability and timeliness. Advocacy material and expertise from Paris 21 will be used when appropriate.