

SECOND HIGH LEVEL ADVOCACY FORUM

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THE FUTURE OF STATISTICS - THE CASE OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Mrs. Arlene Mc Comie

Permanent Secretary

Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development

Role and Importance of Statistics in the Planning Process

- Statistics, statisticians and the statistical system are at the centre of the information generation processes that support planning and development
- We recognize that improving the effectiveness of the planning and development process involves the greater utilization of sound evidence
- The majority of this evidence are essentially statistics

Quality Statistics and Policy

- Quality statistics provide the evidence required to decide, develop and monitor effective development policies and interventions
- They highlight where resources are most needed and provide the means to track progress and assess the performance of different policies
- They are essential elements in the design of monitoring and evaluation activities
- Improve the transparency and accountability of public policy making

Flagship Development Platforms

- The major flagship development platforms that guide us can be found in documents such as:
 1. The Medium Term Policy Framework 2011-2014
 2. Monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
 3. Working for Sustainable Development in T&T
 4. A New Approach to Diversification
 5. National Performance Framework 2012-2015
 6. Human Development Atlas (CSO/UNDP)

Medium Term Policy Framework 2011-2014

The Medium Term Policy Framework outlines the development agenda of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in five priority areas:

1. Crime and Law and Order
2. Agriculture and Food Security
3. Health Care Services and Hospitals
4. Economic Growth, Job Creation, Competitiveness and Innovation
5. Poverty Reduction and Human Capital Development.

Development and Information

These development priorities rely heavily on the national statistical system and the Central Statistical Office to generate statistical information on the socio-economic situation to effectively monitor goals and targets.

Central Statistical Office

- The Central Statistical Office (CSO) stands at the hub of the national statistical system in Trinidad and Tobago
- It's mission is to facilitate informed decision-making, through the timely provision of a quality, relevant, user-oriented and dynamic statistical service; coordinating statistical activities and promoting the adherence to statistical standards

Role of the CSO

The role of the CSO the:

- Coordination of the National Statistical System
- Census Taking eg Population/Agriculture
- Collecting compiling analyzing and publishing statistical information relating to all social and economic activities of the people of the Republic of T&T
- Provision of consultancy and assistant in data collection exercises done by other government departments, international organizations, private sector and researchers

Challenges Faced by the CSO

The CSO face serious challenges in meeting its responsibilities. The main reasons identified:

- The CSO operates with an organizational structure that dates back to 1972
- IT infrastructure and roles are not appropriate for a cutting-edge, innovative organisation
- Low ratio of professional to non-professional staff
- An out-dated Statistics Act (since 1952)
- Over reliance on short term delegated authority staff
- Inadequate accommodation

Production of High Demand Products

- Despite these challenges, the continued loyalty, commitment and professionalism demonstrated by its staff have ensured that statistical information critical for understanding the socio-economic realities continue to be produced
- The CSO also provide critical assistance to other Gov't Departments in data collection and processing on such exercises as the Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) & current Survey of Living Conditions (SLC)

High Demand Products Produced

- Annual GDP estimates
- Rate of Inflation
- Economic Indices of Production & Retail Sales
- Labour Force Statistics
- Food Crop Production,
- Merchandise Trade
- 2011 Population and Housing Census Demographic Report
- 2012 Human Development Atlas

Solutions

- The Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development is fully committed to the transformation of the Central Statistical Office towards a modern national statistical authority
- The CSO can be better positioned to achieve its mandate in providing a high quality, timely and relevant statistical service that is independent and adaptable
- To achieve this, the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development is implementing a number of initiatives in both the short/medium and longer term

Solutions

- The short/medium term initiatives are designed to improve delivery of core economic statistics and to address the current accommodation issue within the next 6 to 12 months
- The long term initiatives are designed to address in a holistic manner, the systemic problems faced by the CSO and enhance the role of the CSO within the national statistical system

Short/Medium Initiatives

Improving the Delivery of Core Economic Data – National Accounts, Trade & Labour Force

- The CSO is working to initiate three projects to address the timeliness of data production in National Accounts, Trade and Labour Force Statistics
- The Central Bank is partnering with the CSO in this process by providing assistance in the three areas

Short/Medium Initiatives

- National Accounts – Recruitment of six professionals to fill vacant positions in the National Accounts Division. These persons would ensure that all sectors are manned by a Sector Specialist
- Trade – Creation of an Editing and Data Quality Unit for the Trade Division (Staffing & Equipment). This unit would identify and correct errors in the ASYCUDA Trade Data supplied by Customs
- Quarterly Labour Force Statistics – Increase in the number of editors and coders to address the backlog in this area

Short/Medium Initiatives

Accommodation

Accommodation has been secured at 3 locations for the housing of the CSO, as a temporary solution while a more permanent location is finalized to house the entire organization in one building.

- Park Street – approx. 12,000 Sq. Ft.
- Furness Court - approx. 10,500 Sq. Ft.
- Capital Mall – approx. 15,000 Sq. Ft.

Longer Term Solutions

1. Regularizing the staff – Temporary staff presently account for approximately 40% of the total staff. A HR consultant has been recruited and is working on regularizing the status of the staff (Delegated Authority)
2. Permanent accommodations for the CSO – Cabinet has approved the rental of a building at 47 Fredrick St. POS to house the entire CSO. The construction of this building (60,000 sq. ft.) is expected to be completed in July 2014.

Longer Term Solutions

- 3. A new legal framework – the current statistics act is out-dated and needs to be replaced. We are presently liaising with CARICOM on the possibility of adopting harmonized legislation
- 4. Modernization of Data Collection and Processing Systems - It is proposed to move towards the electronic collection and transmission of data from the field and digitizing the administrative records. This would significantly improve the timeliness and relevance of statistical products
- 5. Transformation of the CSO to a modern high performing organization

Transformation of the CSO

- The International Consulting Office of Statistics Sweden was contracted during 2006 to 2007 and again over the period February 2012 to February 2013 as part of the restructuring exercise of the CSO
- four comprehensive reports for guiding the transition of the CSO to a modern high performing statistical organization were produced

Transformation of the CSO

These reports

- Produced a draft Bill
- Identified an appropriate model for the restructured CSO
- Defined the Core products to produce
- Designed the most appropriate organizational structure for the new National Statistical Institute
- Elaborated the human resource requirements of the transformed CSO
- Detailed an IT master plan

Transformation of the CSO

The final restructuring report (February 2013) has been accepted as the main framework for the transformation of the CSO. The main proposals of this report comprise:

- An improved capacity to manage CSO
- Increased capacity to manage the coordination role within the statistical system of Trinidad and Tobago
- Focus on service to the users through improved capacity to respond to queries and also by making the external web site the focal point of the dissemination of statistics

Transformation of the CSO

- A strengthened development capacity through improved IT systems & infrastructure and increased expertise in statistical methodology
- Increased number of professional staff with advanced skills in demography, socio/economic/environmental analyses and ICT

❖ A cabinet note is being prepared for consideration re acceptance of the recommendations of Statistics Sweden Report so we can accelerate the transformation process.

Conclusion

- Effective public policy entails the best use of resources to achieve the best possible outcomes for improving national development
- High quality, relevant and timely statistical information provides much of the evidence required to make sound decisions
- Empowering the national statistical system and the CSO must be a priority to enable effective national development

Thank You