**DATA DISSEMINATION EXPERIENCE AND PRACTICES IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

**BACKGROUND**

The Central Statistical Office is a division of the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development and is charged with the responsibility of taking censuses in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Its core functions involve the collecting, compiling, analyzing and publishing statistical information relating to all social and economic activities of the people of the twin-island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The main Office is situated in Port of Spain, Trinidad, with a sub-Office in Scarborough, Tobago.

The Central Statistical Office was established in 1952 by the passing of the Statistics Ordinance, Chapter 42, No. 11 of the Revised Ordinance 1952. This Ordinance was later replaced by the Statistics Act, Chapter 19:02 of the Revised laws of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

**MISSION AND VISION**

The statement of core purpose is embodied in its Mission Statement:

***The mission of the Central Statistical Office is to facilitate informed decision-making, through the timely provision of a high-quality, relevant, user-oriented and dynamic statistical service, coordinating statistical activities and promoting the adherence to statistical standards.***

Its vision articulates:

***The Central Statistical Office is the premier information and research institution, committed to being a learning and innovative organization staffed by well motivated personnel and enhanced through continuous quality improvement, to provide timely, high-quality and relevant goods and services, utilizing state of the art technology for customer satisfaction***.

**OPERATIONS/CORE FUNCTIONS**

1. Data Collection – collects accurate primary and secondary data in a timely and efficient manner.
2. Data Processing – transforms raw data into information.
3. Analysis of data – analysis and evaluation of statistical data.
4. **Dissemination of data – provision of publications and information to a wide range of users.**
5. Improvement and Development of Products – conducts methodological revisions of existing products and development of new products.
6. **Consultancy – provides technical assistance in**
   1. **Sample design and conduct surveys.**
   2. **Provision of geographic information services.**

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CSO**

Under the Statistics Act, the Director of Statistics has the following responsibilities:

1. Conduct Population, Agricultural and Industrial Surveys and Censuses.
2. Collect, compile, analyze and **publish** **high-quality, timely and relevant statistical information relating to different sections of the Economy of Trinidad and Tobago.**
3. Collaborate with other Government Departments in the collection, compilation, analysis and **publication** **of statistical data on a continuous and timely basis.**
4. Organize and maintain a coordinated set of economic and social statistics relating to Trinidad and Tobago (in accordance with the Statistics Act, Chapter19:02) consistent with International Standards.

**CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA**

The Statistics Act guarantees confidentiality of information collected. It states, specifically, that data disseminated by the Central Statistical Office must be reported in a manner to prevent any particular individual from being identified as information relating to an individual or undertaking, except with prior consent in writing of that individual or person carrying on the undertaking.

Strict penalties are prescribed under the Act for breach of this confidentiality.

**DISSEMINATION OF DATA**

**Publications and Information**

The Central Statistical Office is equipped with its own Printing Department so that the reports/bulletins are made available at a subsidized cost so that more people can acquire them.

The information compiled by the Central Statistical Office can be readily accessed by both the public and private sectors. The Business community, Government departments, Non-Governmental Organizations, Universities, students, researchers and anyone concerned with current issues and changes in the society will find the available data extremely useful.

As Publications become available, they are distributed to the Office of the Prime Minister, the Line Minister and the Communications Officer for distribution to the media.. A list of Publication/Bulletins with the corresponding periodicity and cost is available to all data users.

Access to statistics is also provided through telephone enquiry and fax systems as well as direct access (personal or walk-in service). To access information from the Central Statistical Office data users can visit our Offices during the hours of 8.00 am to 4.00 pm, Mondays through Fridays – no appointments are necessary

The CSO provides simultaneous release of its publications to all interested parties as well as the Print and Electronic media. For major Publications such as Census Reports and Special Reports, media launches are held with all the relevant stakeholders.

In some instances where actual data is not available, provisional estimates and projected data are provided.

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**Library Services**

The Central Statistical Office is equipped with a well stocked, user friendly Library which includes the historical publications of the CSO as well as Regional and International publications of other Organizations. The Library is also open to the public on a daily basis – no appointments are necessary and there in no charge for use. The Library also distributes the CSO Reports/bulletins to many Universities, Government Departments, International and Regional Organizations and other Special Organizations free of charge.

**Geographic Information Section/Mapping Unit**

The main function of the GIS is to produce and provide enumeration district maps to field interviewers for data collection for surveys and censuses. Currently maps are drawn and updated manually and GIS generated maps are produced using data collected from surveys and censuses. Some examples are: Population Distribution of Communities by Municipal Corporations, Location of Social Infrastructure by Municipal Corporations, Location of Police Stations by Police Divisions boundaries, Location of Health facilities by Region Health Authority boundaries and Location of Schools by Education District boundaries.

GIS maps are also produced when required by data requests.

**Web Data Dissemination**

The URL of the Central Statistical Office’s website is <http://www.cso.gov.tt/> . Most datasets produced by the CSO are published on the website, but the more specialized researcher would have to contact the CSO’s offices for more detailed information. There are a number of problems associated with the operation of the site including the fact that there is no provision for a webmaster in the staff structure of the CSO. This has resulted in web content management being placed under the parent Ministry thereby slowing up data updates and occasionally leading to mis-classifications of datasets. It is planned that the handover of content management to the staff of the CSO will take place in the fourth quarter of this year.

**Metadata**

Most of the information is published on a regular basis, through established books and reports in hard and soft copy. These Reports contain the methodology used, concepts and definitions, some analysis and macro data tables. Unfortunately these and other aspects of metadata are not currently published on the organization’s website, except for the socioeconomic database known as cTTinfo. These data are entered in the DEVINFO software which readily accommodates the inclusion of the pertinent metadata for each (MDG) indicator. However we are in the process of website redesign so as to incorporate the metadata associated with each dataset presented.

**Data Requests**

The Central Statistical Office also provides data requests services to its clients. This is necessary due to the variety and complexity of data requested from government departments, businesses, researchers and other individuals and the fact that these requests cannot be catered for in the normal publications printed and distributed by the Central Statistical Office. Also some of these requests are usually for micro data, which has to be specially generated to preserve the integrity of the data.

Some of these requests are free while others may incur a small cost, which is usually communicated to the Clients before processing same.

**Emerging trends in Data Requests**

The CSO has been receiving an increased number of requests for statistical data including micro-data, technical support and assistance mainly from organizations in the Public Sector, but also from the private sector, researchers and International Organizations. These requests include micro data access, multiple data queries, assistance with sample selection and sample design, field data collection, questionnaire design and data processing and analysis. The CSO is desirous of providing such support as they contribute to the coordination of the National Statistical System, ensure proper statistical methods and procedures are adopted and guarantee data integrity and data quality. This is critical towards supporting government developmental framework through informed decision making in various government ministries

**The Proposed Dissemination, Collaboration and Quality Division**

The Dissemination, Collaboration and Quality Division will undertake activities related to the CSO’s function to coordinate the National Statistical System, meet additional dissemination functions and will perform data quality assessments along the lines of the IMF’s Data Quality Assessment Framework. The Division will also provide the necessary research effort needed for the development and monitoring of public use micro data files that conform with the confidentiality requirements of the Statistics Act.

In addition, the Dissemination, Collaboration and Quality Division will also be required to undertake activities that enhance the collaboration efforts in data production between the CSO and Other government ministries and Data producers. The Dissemination, Collaboration and Quality Division will also be responsible for incorporating new technologies (such as android and other smart mobile technology) into the work processes of the CSO with regard to data dissemination and related tasks

One major output of this project would be the dissemination of micro socioeconomic data to specialized researchers. This will empower such researchers to conduct studies that examine crime, poverty, chronic illnesses and any number of socioeconomic phenomena experienced by the people of Trinidad and Tobago in much greater detail. It is hoped that this would lead to the formulation of more effective public policies, as well as a greater demand for the statistical products of the CSO.

**Other Services**

In addition to the publication of numerous reports and bulletins, the Central Statistical Office provides consultancy services in the form of technical assistance in sample design and the conduction of surveys, research projects etc.

Costs for undertaking research and consultancy services vary according to the quantity of data required and the time span necessary for processing. However, an estimate is usually provided to the client before proceeding with the actual service.

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