

Communiqué for the World Bank

Re. The International Comparison Programme (ICP)

2015-09-10

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On behalf of the CARICOM Advisory Group on Statistics (AGS)

The 38th Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians in October 2013 provided a Status Report on the ICP experiences of countries in the Caribbean region. A statement on this status was presented to the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) at its 46th Meeting in March 2015.

It was recalled that the ICP was launched at a Meeting in Barbados in 2010, and that the deadline for the submission of data was June 2013. It was noted that all countries had submitted the preliminary data on Prices and National Accounts as required.

Challenges/Weaknesses of Process

It was also noted that the coordination and organisation of the ICP was not of the highest quality in terms of its execution in Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries. Limited feedback was received from UN-ECLAC on the submission of the ICP National Accounts and Price data. It was especially noted that insufficient attention was paid to the National Accounts component in the implementation of the ICP in countries of this sub-region. Indeed, the area of National Accounts by Expenditure, Basic Headings, was a very weak area for countries of the region, with the exception of Jamaica.

Recommendations for Improving the Process in the future

The following recommendations were made for improving the future process of the ICP in CARICOM countries:

- (i). That the World Bank/Global Office (or the responsible coordinating agency involved in the next ICP Round), allow the CARICOM Secretariat/Experts in the Region relative to the ICP to have a greater coordinating and technical role in the conduct of the ICP process in CARICOM countries. If these experts were allowed to play a greater role in the ICP process during the last round, this would imply less dependence by the Region on experts from outside in the coordination and execution of the technical work in the next Round.

- (ii). Related to the point (i) above, a Training of trainers programme for experts in the region should be undertaken prior to the next round of ICP in order to enable a sound understanding of the entire process by these experts. This would further reinforce capacity within the region relative to ICP coordination and execution.
- (iii). There is need to strengthen capacity in the area of National accounts, in particular the expenditure of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), up to the Basic Headings and the Private Final Consumption Expenditure which is often estimated as a residual. This will enable better estimation of the Basic Headings in the next ICP Round.
- (iv). That there be a change in the organisational structure and administration in the conduct of the ICP in the CARICOM region, with specific roles in the administering and technical conduct of the ICP residing in the CARICOM Secretariat.
- (v). That the CARICOM region should commence preparations for the next ICP round. In this regard, the following preparations were recommended to be undertaken:
- the **establishment of an ICP unit** in their relevant departments prior to the start of the conduct of the next ICP round;
 - that there should be more timely access by the region to the Global list of items for which prices are to be collected in the ICP and that some **preliminary work be put in place across the region relative to a comparative list of items in the CPI** prior to the next ICP round;
 - The **request for a specialist technical support person** to work within the region for the duration of the next ICP round. It was **emphasized** that the Region should lobby for a technical support specialist from the World Bank or the supporting agency.

Further to the above, at the 16th Meeting of the CARICOM Advisory Group on Statistics (AGS) in July 2015, it was also recommended that a sub-regional list of commodities be produced for the ICP and that this list should feed into the regional Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) list, and further into the global list; essentially advocating for a bottom-up instead of a top-down approach to the production of the list.

It is anticipated that the adoption of these recommendations would greatly improve the timeliness and accuracy of ICP submissions from CARICOM countries in the future.

References:

<http://www.caricomstats.org/Files/Meetings/SCCS39/Paper9.pdf>;

<http://www.caricomstats.org/Files/Meetings/SCCS38/Revised/PDF/Paper12.pdf>

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/sc2015.htm>

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc15/Intervention-3i-Barbados.pdf>