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The millennium development goals: strategic implications for the Latin American and Caribbean statistical systems

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Summary

This document synthesizes and updates the results of a research programme conducted at the request of the Statistical Conference of the Americas (SCA). It builds upon a first report, available in Spanish, which was prepared by José L. Cervera-Ferri, consultant at the Statistics and Economic Projections Division of the ECLAC. It was based, inter alia, on the answers to an ECLAC questionnaire circulated to the National Statistical Offices (NSOs) of the region in 2005 regarding the "institutional aspects of monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the response of the National Statistical Systems (NSS) in producing the necessary indicators. The objective was to analyze the way information gathered by the diverse entities that form the NSS in the region is systematized at national level, and identify the role NSOs should take as rector and coordinator of the NSS.

This questionnaire was the first step in a 2005-2007 programme of research and technical assistance conducted by the Statistics and Economic Projections Division of the ECLAC, with a view of strengthening technical and institutional capacities in the region. Intermediary results were presented and discussed at the Third Statistical Conference of the Americas, in June 2005. In November 2006, a regional seminar was organized by ECLAC to update the evaluation of the NSOs' situation with regard to the MDGs. This meeting was the opportunity to review the changes that occur since 2005, and analyse the best regional practices.

The present document identifies six main challenges facing the national statistical systems in following-up the MDGs, ranging from expanding the availability of data to securing the proper institutional

and financial context. These challenges are interrelated, and therefore the coordination of the national statistical systems should be viewed as a strategic priority. In addition to strengthening the systemic coherence of the various national statistical actors, the report identifies a series of technical issues that require specific attention in view of coordinating the monitoring of the MDGs.

Monitoring the MDGs provides also opportunities for strengthening national statistical systems. Indeed, the follow-up to the MDGs has helped generating national, regional and international discussions a policy level on the importance of statistical information in the development process. The document revises these opportunities and proposes a strategy that engages all the statistics-generating agencies in each Latin American and Caribbean country. The Statistical Conference of the Americas has taken the lead in this respect, by formally including the monitoring of the MDGs as one of the main dimension of its 2005-2015 strategic plan. The document underlines the specific role of the SCA for the development of the statistical capabilities in Latin America and the Caribbean and for bridging the existing gaps between national and international MDG indicators. It is also offers some preliminary and partial answers from Latin America and the Caribbean to the call of the United Nations Statistical Commission' s Friends of the Chair on MDGs indicators asking Regional Commissions to "conduct studies of the ability of countries to provide reliable data on MDG indicators".

I. Background and objectives

In September 2000, the World's Heads of State gathered at the General Assembly of the United Nations to explore ways of pooling their combined will and efforts to revitalize international cooperation on behalf of the less developed countries and, in particular, to mount a frontal assault on extreme poverty. On that occasion they identified goals for their efforts to combat poverty and hunger, reverse environmental degradation, achieve improvements in the fields of education and health, and promote gender equality. Because the lack of development is a problem that concerns the entire world, the formation of a partnership to enrich and reinvigorate international cooperation should be one of the eight Goals.

This "Millennium Declaration" established the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for the advancement of human development. The Goals are underpinned also by the various agreements reached at a series of World Summits held by the United Nations in the 1990s : Jomtien (Education, 1990), Rio de Janeiro (Environment, 1992), Cairo (Population, 1994) Copenhagen (Social development, 1994) Beijing (Gender, 1995) and other related international events.

Every effort was made to express the Goals as clearly as possible, and specific targets were set for the progress to be made by 2015 in relation to the major economic and social issues involved in meeting the Goals. The countries also agreed to review the progress made towards the Goals on a regular basis in order to ensure that efforts to attain the Goals would not fade as time went on. For this purpose, the eight Goals are structured with 18 targets.

A list of 48 indicators were prepared in reference to the Goals and targets, to serve as a means of conducting a quantitative assessment of the position of States members committed to the Millennium Declaration and of following up their progress (see annex 1 for a list of targets and indicators). The dates of reference established for achieving these were 1990, as the base year, and 2015, as the target year.

In 2006, a proposal for new targets was accepted by the general Assembly, with regard to full and productive employment and decent work for all, to reproductive health by 2015; to access to treatment for HIV/AIDS and to reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity. At the time of writing this report, the related indicators and their definition was in the process of being identified by a group of national and international experts. The objective was to submit the list to the UN Statistical Commission at the end of 2007.

In addition, the regional community is currently looking into the possibility of adapting the list of official indicators, in order to have a more relevant coverage of the regional situation. The proposal is being prepared by a regional ECLAC project for strengthening the regional capacity to monitor the MDGs, with a view to adapt the indicators to the region's need and focusing on four dimensions: Poverty, education, gender and environment. The revised proposal is also expected to be available in 2007 (see Annex 1 again for more details on the new targets and supplementary indicators).

Governments and international institutions have recognized that follow-up to the MDGs represents an additional challenge for their national statistical systems. This recognition has been reflected in the declarations of a number of institutional forums,[1] which have pointed up the importance of strengthening statistical systems.

Global efforts to monitor the MDGs have also afforded priority to improving the international statistical system (meaning national statistical systems plus the statistical systems of the international organizations). The Monterrey Declaration (2002) recognises the importance of strengthening National Statistical Systems in order to have a better programming and monitoring of social development programmes. The Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS) was adopted in 2004 by the Statistical Commission of the United Nations to increase the effectiveness of this monitoring.[2]

In the Latin American and Caribbean region, the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas (SCA) underlined the challenges and opportunities involved in following up the MDGs. At its fourth meeting, held in Dallas, United States from 30 November to 1 December 2004 the Executive Committee requested the Division of Statistics and Economic projections of ECLAC to investigate and report on the processes employed by the countries of the region to follow up the MDGs, and to present to SCA a number of suggestions as to how this follow-up might be improved. This recommendation initiated a process of consultation and research, which led –inter alia– to the preparation of the present report. The subject was also examined carefully at the third meeting of the Conference, in June 2005 (see Box 1). The present document reassesses the main priorities identified by members of the Conference and the trends emerging from various studies.

During this Third Conference, the delegates agreed also upon the importance of having a strategic plan to guide the activities of the Conference up to 2015 and to provide orientation for programming the statistical activities of ECLAC, as well as the efforts of other multilateral and regional agencies in Latin America and the Caribbean. The SCA identified the monitoring of the

[1] Inter alia, the First Roundtable on Better Measuring, Monitoring, and Managing for Development Results, Washington, D.C., 2002; the Second Roundtable, Marrakech, 2004; Development Assistance Committee, 2003.

[2] World Bank/International Monetary Fund, Global Monitoring Report 2004. Policies and Actions for Achieving the MDGs and Related Outcomes (DC2004-0006), Washington, D.C., April 2004.

MDGs as one of its four strategic objectives for the long term In order to derive a concrete plan of action to implement the Conference resolutions and orient the work of its Executive Committee, the delegates recommended also the creation of a special Working Group on this topic.

The purpose of the strategic plan 2005-2015 is to guide the activities of the Statistical Conference of the Americas in support of the development of official statistics in Latin America and the Caribbean. The year 2015 was chosen as the reference for the strategic vision on the basis of the timeframe associated with the Millennium Development Goals, which constitute a significant challenge for the region's national statistical systems in terms of the need to develop an appropriate information system for follow-up of the Goals.

Four Goals were identified by the SCA:

Goal 1: To strengthen the strategic and operational management practices and organization of the national statistical offices and national statistical systems in order to ensure the quality of their outputs and the satisfaction of users.

Goal 2: To promote the training of staff in producing statistical information, managing national statistical systems and carrying out research into statistical methodology.

Goal 3: To promote the development of technical and methodological capacities in order to generate high-quality statistical information in the region.

Goal 4: Promote coordination and cooperation between the member countries of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC and international agencies.

The annex 2 develops the actions identified under the goal 3, as they refer more closely to building the technical capacity for monitoring the MDGs.

The first stage of the research programme consisted in reviewing documentation on the status of the Goals and their measurement in every country in which this information was available. Relevant documents from international agencies and conferences were also examined (United Nations Development Programme, Statistical Conference of the Americas, United Nations Statistical Commission, Inter-agency and Expert Group on MDG Indicators, declaration of the heads of the multilateral development banks at Monterrey, Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics, Partnership in Statistics for development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), among others), as well as numerous web pages of national statistical offices (NSOs). The second stage was to circulate a questionnaire to the NSOs. This was answered by most of the countries of the region. In May 2005, a first regional seminar was organised in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

The countries' responses to the questionnaire applied by ECLAC were used to build a series of synoptic tables, as the basis for describing the current situation and preparing recommendations for the SCA. A full version of the review, containing a detailed analysis of the questionnaires and of the recommendations, is to be found in Cervera-Ferri (2005).

In the following months, ECLAC implemented a series of activities geared at building capacity at national level for the monitoring of the MDGs in various specific areas (v.g., gender, environment, poverty) in addition to its traditional regional programmes on population and housing censuses, and household surveys. The activities included reinforcing the regional harmonization of the related indicators, as well as the consistency between national sources and international data bases. The latest of these activities during 2006 was a seminar (9-10 November 2006) organised by the ECLAC Statistics and Economic Projections of ECLAC to update the evaluation of the NSO's

situation in the region with regard to the MDGs.[3] This meeting was the opportunity to review the changes that occur since 2005, and analyse the best regional practices.

The present document builds on these initiatives to present a synthesis on the main technical and institutional challenges and opportunities facing the statistical institutes in Latin America and the Caribbean, with regard to the monitoring of the MDGs.

Box 1

THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS: A PRIORITY FOR THE STATISTICAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAS

At the fourth meeting of the Executive Committee, held in Dallas, United States on 30 November and 1 December 2004, the Statistical Conference of the Americas requested ECLAC to conduct a detailed examination of the following issues: (i) Statistical implications of the follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); (ii) Related issues for the development of national statistical systems in the region, and the responsibilities of national statistical offices (NSOs); (iii) Human resources training and education.

The work begun in December 2004, with the assistance of an international consultant, Mr. Cervera-Ferri and the application of a questionnaire to the NSOs in the region. A first exchange of views with the regional statistical community took place in April 2005 at a joint IADB-World Bank-UNDP-ECLAC workshop entitled "National Statistics Offices face the Millennium Development Goals" held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The preliminary results of the research were officially presented to the Directors of Statistics at the Third Plenary Conference of the SCA, held in Santiago, Chile in June 2005.

As far as the first substantive item was concerned, the presentation introduced a report on the follow-up to the MDGs from the perspective of the national statistical systems in the region, a highlighting the following challenges: availability of social and environmental data, inter-agency coordination within national statistical systems, international comparability, the relevance to national policies of social indicators and the sustainability of human and financial resources for providing follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals.

On the other hand, ECLAC's presentation stressed that the monitoring of the MDGs could —and should— be considered as delivering a set of strategic opportunities for the development of national statistical systems. In particular, the political and technical dimensions of the issue allowed for pursuing the following targets: promotion of the statistical activity as producer of public value; convergence of political and financial interest to channel technical assistance towards the improvement of statistical production, in both coverage and quality; and harmonization of regional statistics, especially in social and environmental sectors.

On the basis of these challenges and opportunities, efforts had to be made to improve long term planning, following the path advocated —inter alia— by PARIS21; b give a higher priority to ¬¬the systemic management and coordination of national statistical systems; access to and use of environmental statistics; and availability of indicators constructed on widely accepted methodologies and practices to conduct regional and international follow-up to the MDGs.

The discussion centred on the necessity for NSOs to be more involved in the national follow-up to the MDGs, which should also be adapted to each countries' needs. For example, the indicators ought to reflect the diversity of situations within countries, in particular with regard to gender, ethnic origin and territorial area. The delegates recommended also that the international agencies responsible for the follow-up process should make it a priority to use updated national data, and emphasized the need to incorporate metadata associated with these indicators. Official development assistance programmes should include a component earmarked for the improvement of related statistical information. It should be noted that in March 2006, the 37th Statistical Commission adopted comparable recommendations.

Source: Based on the working documents and the deliberations of the Third Statistical Conference of the Americas, available at www.eclac.cl/deype/ceacepal/index2.htm

a/ Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC, document LC/L.2318 (CEA.2005/8).

b/ As stated by PARIS21, an NSDS implies a strategy for strengthening statistical capacity across the entire national statistical system (NSS). A basis for effective and results-oriented strategic management of the NSS, it presents a comprehensive and unified framework covering strategic priorities for developing statistics and for building the capacity needed to meet these needs The NSDS provides a vision for where the NSS should be in five to ten years and sets milestones for getting there. It will also provide a framework for mobilising, harnessing and leveraging resources (both national and international).

[3] ECLAC Regional Seminar "National Statistics Offices and the Millennium Development Goals: A new look," Santiago, Chile, 9-10 November 2006 (http://www.eclac.cl/mdg/default_en.htm)

II. Follow-up to the Millenium development goals in Latin America and the Caribbean

The countries of the region have been found to differ considerably in their capacity to follow up the MDGs (Cervera-Ferri, 2005; Cecchini, 2006). Within each country, follow-up capacities also vary from one Goal to another. Important instruments for the monitoring of MDG are the national, subregional and regional reports, often prepared with the leadership and support of UNDP.

At the end of 2006, 27 national reports were available for 20 Latin American countries. Some countries, including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba, Guatemala and Panama have conducted their second national report. Others, such as Colombia, have prepared reports by departments. In the Caribbean subregion, 14 countries had completed a national report, of which 10, referring to the Eastern Caribbean countries, had been undertaken as a joint analysis.

Almost all the national statistical offices (NSOs) have been involved in preparing the reports, albeit with very different degree of participation and coordinating role. For example, the NSOs in the region have seldom been formally involved in preparing MDG monitoring strategies, although in most cases they provided data to the sectoral line-ministries on each of the relevant aspects.

Some national reports on follow-up to the MDGs find that the respective countries have a high capacity to progress towards particular Goals. Overall, however, the regional capacity to follow up the whole array of Goals and criteria is weak. It is important to note

that, in general, this weakness refers more to statistical analysis and the use of existing data in policy and programme planning than to the production or the quality of data. Nevertheless, frequency of compilation of the relevant data also shows some limitations. It is therefore a weakness that calls for both producers and users of statistics to work together to implement mechanisms of continuous follow-up.

The annual plans of NSOs often include statistical operations that serve to obtain indicators relating to the MDGs, albeit in partial form and not every year.[4] Given the need for a longer-term perspective in statistical production, multiyear plans should be prepared, encompassing all the activities of both NSOs and other national agencies (such as line ministries and social programmes) that generate statistics. Indeed, most of the line ministries regularly report statistics to the multilateral specialized agencies. These national data, in turn, serve to build the international data bases that are used for the global monitoring of the MDGs.[5] According to the survey responses received, however, very few of the countries in the region have multiyear strategic plans for statistical activities, and only in a handful of cases do those plans take into account measurements needs relating to the MDGs.

Many countries have also official development policies and specific programmes, such as national poverty reduction strategies, which call for quantitative information in order to establish base lines, monitor trends and evaluate impacts.[6] Other programmes, such as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) debt reduction initiative, require the compilation of many national-level statistical indicators.[7] In addition, a number of countries have set national goals which require the rollout of specific statistical operations (Antigua and Barbuda conducted a survey on the prevalence of drug use with the assistance of the Organization of American States in 1991).

In relation to statistical follow-up of national poverty reduction strategies, the NSOs in the region have seldom been formally involved in preparing such strategies, although in most cases they have had to supply data to the departments responsible for each of the sectoral aspects. This is another challenge for NSOs: producing ad hoc statistical analyses without having been involved in defining the indicators can represent an additional effort when the indicators required by ministerial departments do not coincide with those that NSOs normally issue.

[4] The indicators required to make use of population and housing censuses, which are less frequent than other statistical operations, should be able to be updated by combining with the findings of administrative surveys or registers.

[5] Various diverging official data often coexist for the same concept, without formal coordination and harmonization at national level. It is for example the case for school enrolment and attendance ratios, where administrative data reported by the education ministry may provide a different picture than household surveys performed by NSOs.

[6] In particular, projects that benefit from technical assistance cooperation programmes usually have to provide donors agencies with ad-hoc statistical information.

[7] An example is Bolivia, where resources freed up by the HIPC initiative are allocated to municipalities as a function of statistical indicators on population, poverty (measured in non-monetary terms) and education.

III. Challenges for national statistical systems

Many challenges were identified in analysing the capacity to follow-up the MDGs. They can be summarized as follows:

(i) Increasing the availability of data;

(ii) Mapping and expanding the use of existing data;

(iii) Making data more relevant to national policymaking;

(iv) Reducing time lag and ensuring medium- and long term continuity;

(v) Improving international comparability:

(vi) Securing the human and financial resources needed for the follow-up process.

Since these challenges are interrelated, the coordination of the national statistical systems should be viewed as a strategic priority that arises naturally from the exercise of monitoring the MDGs at the national level. The following section will develop some of the major points raised by the six challenges.

A. Increasing the availability of indicators and other topics related with the relevance of existing data

In order to investigate data availability and cover the points 1 to 3 of the previous list of challenges, the research focused on the data bases maintained by UNSD and ECLAC (see Box 2).[8] At global level, most indicators produced nationally and related with the MDGs are obtained from the following sources: population and housing censuses, household surveys, and administrative records (i.e. public health or school records).[9] Another study found that more than half of the 48 indicators could be derived from household surveys (indeed, 10 of them could not be obtained in any other way).[10] However, some indicators, such as those related to Goal 7, are obtained from ad-hoc monitoring systems.[11] Nevertheless, comparable indicators are often provided by multilateral specialised agencies, and based on national sources (such as for target 1 and 2).

Surprisingly, responses to the ECLAC's survey indicated that practically none of the countries had undertaken statistical operations to produce or improve the most problematic indicators, except in the case of the proportion of population below the minimum level of dietary energy consumption (indicator 5).

Others indicators, such as those referring to official development assistance in Goal 8, come from statistics compiled by international agencies. The main technical and financial challenge for national statistical systems is to increase the availability and quality of data from those international sources.

The analysis of comparability between the national, regional or international levels showed that the indicators needed to follow up the MDGs according to the internationally agreed methodology had sometimes few points in common with national practices. It is in particular the case for poverty reduction strategies, as most Latin American countries use poverty indicators based on national poverty lines, and not the one dollar a day, computed at Purchasing Power Parities. Indeed, the survey responses showed that the standard MDG indicators used to monitor poverty, education, living conditions and access to information and communications technologies are generally simpler than those required at the national level. Additionally, the MDG indicators referring to HIV/AIDS and other diseases, access to essential medicines and sustainable development coincide little with those requested at the national level.

Indeed, monitoring and evaluating national policies naturally require a greater disaggregating of statistical data by geographical area and by population group (breakdowns by sex, area of residence, ethnic minorities, and so on). National statistical systems therefore need to design data collection operations to yield the required data, by increasing the size or the geographical coverage of the sample as Bolivia, Brazil, El Salvador and Nicaragua indicate in their responses and this requires greater resources. It should be noted that most international agencies advocate the need to break-down national averages at country level, whenever possible, in order to have a clearer picture of the country's situation with regard to achieving the MDGs. It is necessary to advance towards "evidence-based" decision making and be in a better situation to efficiently design and manage the related social policies. Therefore, any effort to develop MDGs related indicators should, when

[8] The initial evaluation was realized in January 2005, using the UNSD on-line data base http://millenniumindicators.un.ort/unsd/mi/mi goals asp and ECLAC's http//websie.eclac.cl/sisgen/badeinso.asp. Environmental data availability is based on ECLAC's http://websie.eclac.cl/sisgen/badeimaDEPE.asp. The evaluation was updated on the basis of Cecchini (2006) and the working documents prepared for the ECLAC seminar "Las oficinas nacionales de estadística frente a los objetivos de desarrollo del milenio: Una nueva evaluación", 9-10 November 2006.

[9] Six case studies conducted in the framework of PARIS21 in 2003 and 2004 (Bolivia, Moldavia, Malawi, Burkina Faso, Cambodia and Yemen) confirmed the predominance of these data sources.

[10] J. Muñoz and K. Scott, "Household Surveys and the Millennium Development Goals", PARIS21, 2004.

[11] Countries that have developed a continuous environmental statistical production and dissemination system includes Chile, Mexico, Brazil and Panama, whereas many others are developing their systems, having advanced so far in the construction of statistics and indicators.

possible, incorporate the various pertinent disaggregations. But for international comparability, only the national averages are required because many less advanced countries are still not in a position to provide the needed information.

A paradox thus arises, since the region lacks information on MDG indicators, yet national policies need still more information. Better use of statistics through more comprehensive data analysis and more thorough dissemination could increase the availability of data both for national policies and for international follow-up to the MDGs.

Box 2
ANDEAN A COMPARISON BETWEEN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON MDG INDICATORS

Responding to the Report of the Friends of the Chair on MDGs indicators asking Regional Commissions to "conduct studies of the ability of countries to provide reliable data on MDG indicators",[12] ECLAC compared national and international data series.[13] The methodology consisted of (1) the creation of a National MDG reports database covering 34 Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries; (2) the selection of data on Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries from the UNSD MDG Indicators database; (3) a comparison between national and international data series; and (4) the construction of a matrix to analyze the differences between national and international data series.

The main results of the study are the following:

Most national MDG reports do not publish proveer metadata –lack of clarity on data sources, on methods of computation and, sometimes, even on the reference year of an observation– or do not include statistical annexes; some reports are particularly weak in the presentation of data, as they lack data series and often present data in the text, rather than in tables or charts.

Statistical information on goals 2 (education), 3 (gender), 4 (child mortality) and 5 (maternal mortality) is available in most countries. For goal 1 (poverty and hunger), less than half of the countries report on indicators such as the poverty gap and the percentage of population below the minimum level of dietary energy consumption. However, most of the data gaps refer to goals 6 (HIV/AIDS and other illnesses) 7 (environment), and some of the targets of goal 8 (global partnership for development).

Within the region, Panama is the country with information on most MDG indicators (85% of indicators presented with at least one observation). Latin American countries show greater data availability than the Caribbean countries, as most small Caribbean countries report on less than 50% of MDG indicators, and some of them did not even prepare a National MDG report.

The UNSD MDG Indicators database usually provides more information than National MDG reports: the former provides information on a larger number of Latin American and Caribbean countries and territories (46 versus 34) and contains a higher percentage of information on MDG indicators (62% of indicators with at least two observations in the 1990-2006 period versus 41%) than the latter.

Data on LAC countries available through the UNSD MDG Indicators database were classified mostly as country data (36% of the cases) or country adjusted data (27%). Imputed data and global monitoring data represented, respectively, 25% and 9% of data series. Entirely modelled data represent only 3% of LAC data series.

Comparing indicators in National MDG reports and in the UNSD MDG Indicators database, it appeared that only 11% of the series contained the same data. Differences are due to adjustments to country data, as well as to modelling and the use of global monitoring data, on the part of international agencies; to different definitions of indicators; different data sources; different observation years; the use of different population data in the denominator of indicators; as well as to coordination problems at the national and international levels.

Despite differences in absolute percentage terms, national and international data generally give similar results in terms of trends (i.e. show the same direction of change over time).

As it is well known in international official statistics, it is not always possible to have both representative and comparable indicators, and trade-off occurs. There is nevertheless room to improve data harmonization as well as coordination between countries and international agencies. One of the conclusion of the study is the need in LAC countries to increase the quality of metadata, both at the national and international levels, and to support the strengthening of the three pillars of data sources: censuses, household surveys and administrative records.

Source: Cecchini (2006)

[12] United Nations Economic and Social Council (2005), Report of the Friends of the Chair on Millennium Development Goals indicators: Note by the Secretary-General, Statistical comisión, Thirty-seventh session, 7 – 10 March 2006, E/CN.3/2006/15.
[13] See http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Default.aspx.

B. Reducing time lag

It is necessary to bear in mind that the indicators used to monitor progress towards the MDGs have a time horizon, as the classification of countries used in global reports (countries which are "on-track" or "off-track") refers to changes over time, in particular to forecasts made for 2005, 2010 and 2015. An ideal information framework would provide sufficient data for the 1990-2005 period.

Analysis of the data for all the indicators in Latin American and Caribbean countries reveals a substantial time lag between the reference dates and the availability of the indicators calculated on the basis of income and expenditure surveys as well as of demographic and health surveys. The time lag is shorter for data based on education and health records. These indicators are based on administrative registers that line ministries use to collect for their every-day operations.

Reducing time lag involves not only more frequent surveys, but also or, perhaps, more importantly a coordinated effort to validate and complement national data using all the relevant official sources. Follow-up to the MDGs therefore requires medium- and long-term planning of data production from different sources: population censuses, household survey systems, demographic and health surveys and education and health records. This planning cannot be done without the establishment of a functional national statistical system, with adequate resources and clear governance. The countries must therefore rise to the challenge of ensuring ongoing technical and financial resources, adopting an inter-ministerial approach where the NSO should take a leading role.

C. Improving international comparability

The improvement of international comparability of statistical data is another of the major challenges identified in the ECLAC's survey. This point was stressed repeatedly by delegates during the dedicated session of the Third SCA in June 2005, as well as during the 37th United Nations Statistical Commission, in March 2006.[14]

The data used in United Nations reports for monitoring the MDGs at international level come from specialized international agencies and exhibit the following traits:

(i) Aggregated regional figures that are based on the availability of data at the national level. Their quality is therefore a function of the quality of national data;

(ii) The reference dates of national data can vary from one country to another, which means that estimates (imputations) based on modelling hypotheses have to be made;

(iii) The adjustments made are meant to bring the results closer to a common methodology in order to allow for inter-country comparisons;

(iv) The variety of national definitions and methodologies of data collection makes this task more difficult, especially in relation to estimating the accuracy of the aggregate figures;

(v) This is particularly the case for data from administrative records, which reflect the administrative procedures of each country, and are therefore less harmonized than data from surveys and censuses.

This suggests a two-way approach at national level, strengthening the data collected using statistical methods (such as censuses and household surveys) according to international standards as

[14] See the draft resolution adopted by the Statistical Commission on strengthening statistical capacity, in Statistical Commission "Report on the thirty-seventh session (7-10 March 2006)" E/2006/24 and E/CN.3/2006/32.

a first priority, and developing a longer-term strategy to improve the usefulness of administrative registers for statistical purposes.

At international level, efforts should continue to strengthen co-operation among international agencies and their national counterparts with the objective of avoiding imputation unless specific country data are available, and conduct these imputations through transparent and documented methodologies. As mentioned, the recent recommendation 20006/6 from the 37th Statistical Commission on Strengthening Statistical Capacity paves the way for such co-operation. Obviously, the role of the NSO acting as "statistical clearing house" is crucial for ensuring that the sectorial data reported by each national entity to their respective multilateral agencies have been elaborated according to international standards and has been validated against other national.

D. Human and financial resources needed for the MDG follow-up process

Autonomous human and financial resources must be secured for following up the MDGs. Household consumption and living conditions surveys in the region have often been financed by the Programme for the Improvement of Surveys and the Measurement of Living Conditions in Latin America and the Caribbean (ISLC, *MECOVI* in Spanish) with financial assistance from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), while population, health and fertility surveys have received partial funding from bilateral agencies and the United Nations system. In some countries, population censuses have also been partly funded with external resources.

As well as the insufficiency of autonomous financing, in some countries it is a challenge for NSOs to recruit and retain professionals to carry out the additional tasks needed to follow up the MDGs. Projects funded by international agencies often recruit consultants on a temporary basis, which does not help to create long-term statistical capacity as it would the hiring of permanent staff in NSOs.

In some countries, technical cooperation projects include surveys in areas such as health, education and the labour market but do not directly involve NSOs. Since these projects require highly qualified staff and offer more attractive salary packages, the statistical system is plagued by a sort of "cannibalism", as NSO staff are lured away by these incentives and leave their posts. This is worsened by the fact that these surveys are not conducted on a regular basis nor do they form part of the national statistical programme, thus do not build a lasting additional capacity. In a number of cases, the projects respond to international recommendations and priorities, and the officers in charge of these surveys do not appear to be aware of or able to adjust to the country's specific priorities with regard to the indicators needed to measure progress towards the MDGs.

E. Towards a systemic approach: coordination aspects

The interrelationship of the problems set out above calls for an emphasis on coordination, in the interests of the efficient operation of national statistical systems in general as well as follow-up to the MDGs. The following aspects of coordination warrant particular mention: the identification of actors and the division of responsibilities, leadership among the institutions that produce information, the establishment of common technical standards, and the best use of existing technical and human resources.

MDG indicators come from a variety of sources and are generated by different national institutions. The administrative departments responsible for producing different statistics must therefore be identified in order to undertake MDGs follow up activities at the national level.

Collaboration among such departments could take the form of thematic cooperation agreements[15] or inter-agency groups with responsibilities clearly allocated for establishing technical standards on data collection and analysis, field work and the verification and dissemination of findings.

The multiplicity of actors involved in national statistical systems, particularly in relation to MDG indicators, requires institutional leadership. Given their area of expertise, NSOs are best placed to exercise this technical leadership and serves as the national "statistical clearing house" validating the exchange of data with international organizations.

National statistical systems must also be structured by a legal framework, which must endow NSOs with certain powers to establish technical procedures, including at least: (i) the establishment of technical standards, definition, nomenclatures and survey frameworks; (ii) the obligation to consult the office before altering administrative records that could be used for statistical purposes; (iii) the conferral of official status to statistical results; and (iv) the preparation of national plans of statistical activities.[16]

In coordinating statistical activities for MDGs follow-up, NSOs should consider the following matters, in the framework of the national statistical system and in coordination with the other institutions involved:

(i) Legal coordination:

- Establishment of an adequate institutional framework to represent the bodies that produce information, including (at least) the national authorities in the areas of health, education, employment, environment and housing. Such a framework could serve, among other purposes, to assess the national capacity to follow up the MDGs.
- Legal provisions that NSOs can use (following appropriate analysis and consensus) to establish technical standards that are mandatory for other data producers.
- Legal provisions required to confer official status upon data from statistical operations conducted by institutions that are members of the national statistical system. This is particularly important in the case of statistical operations financed entirely by external agents without prior integration into national programmes of statistical activities.[17]

An institutional framework (national master plan) to ensure sustainable funding from the national budget (or from donor cooperation, where relevant) for the operation of national statistical systems and for the implementation of programmes of statistical work. In particular, the implementation of population and housing surveys, household survey programmes and the maintenance of administrative health and education records should be included in the funding priorities for follow-up to the MDGs.

(ii) Technical coordination:

- Establishment of sampling frameworks for the preparation of household surveys, whether conducted by the NSO or by other institutions.

[15] For example, the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) of Argentina has established, together with the Department of the Environment, a new system of indicators of sustainable development, the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC) of Nicaragua is working with the National Health Council on the establishment of indicators of Goals 7 and 8; and the National Statistical Institute (INE) of Guatemala collaborates with the Military Geographical Institute for mapping purposes.

[16] In completing the questionnaire, Paraguay emphasized the need to establish a legal framework that would give the Department of Statistics and Censuses a leading role in the national statistical system, which it lacks at present.

[17] There are cases in the region of surveys on gender, health, literacy, and so forth, conducted by government institutions in collaboration with foreign bilateral development agencies in the context of cooperation projects, whose results are not subsequently recognized as official.

- Establishment of definitions on the levels of education, enrolment and completion of schooling, in agreement with the institutions responsible for education records. These definitions should be adapted to country conditions and can be used to generate internationally harmonized data.

- Establishment of data collection methods on maternal health, immunization, HIV/AIDS and other diseases to ensure the statistical representativeness of the population groups studied.

- Allocation to the national statistical system of the responsibility of conducting specialized statistical operations (for example, with regard to adult literacy, nutrition, health status, use of contraceptives, household fuel use, and endowment and use of information technologies).

- Establishment of procedures for documenting statistical information to be followed by all the agencies in the national statistical system, through the dissemination of standardized metadata.

(iii) Coordination in resource allocation:

- Design a national master plan for the long term development and integration of official statistics according to strategic priorities.

- Development of synergies among the different institutions' financial resources for the implementation of large-scale statistical operations (for example, collaboration with registry offices for the design of samples, as well as with schools, health centres and local administrations).

- Making good use throughout the national statistical system of the technical capacities of highly qualified staff, by having them participate in inter-agency task forces and in training programmes. Many NSOs in the region already provide technical assistance to the other producers, at least sporadically.

- Efficient use of information and communications technology resources available within the different agencies in the national statistical system and other administrative departments (including local ones) for data collection, processing and dissemination.

- Coordination of financial resources from external sources of funding, to avoid costly statistical operations that are not integrated into the master plan of programmes of national activities.

The monitoring of MDG goal 7 is a good example of the need for coordination in this complex context. Environmental dynamics and its measurement are uniquely complex, and thus require a permanent improvement of the scientific, statistical and institutional capacities, as each nation progresses in the path of producing and using environmental series. As a matter of fact, in Latin American and Caribbean countries, environmental statistics, indicators and integrated accounting constitute an emergent field of statistical work (see Box 3).

Box 3
MONITORING MDG7 ENVIRONMENT INDICATORS: THE INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGE

In the last decade and a half, Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries have advanced heterogeneously towards the improvement of their system of environment statistics. There has been progress towards better inter-institutional coordination, but most of the environmental statistical products are sporadic, and their creation is usually the result from the ad-hoc organization and building of capacities of a specific subset of relevant institutions.[18]

This is especially the case of the monitoring of the MDG7 in National Reports. Most countries managed to fulfill this task, some innovated with new indicators, relying in the joint participation of environmental, statistical and other relevant sectorial official agencies (i.e. energy, housing, utilities, industry), though it was typically through the association of ad hoc teams, that usually included Environmental Ministries, other sectorial institutions and the statistical office. Existing environmental statistics inter-institutional committees or permanent technical groups positively contributed in this endeavour. But since national coordination in matters related with environmental statistics is not a permanent characteristic in most LAC countries, MDG7 reporting teams last what was necessary to produce the reports.

A similar process characterized the production of the first regional LAC report, led by ECLAC. An ad hoc interagency (ECLAC, UNEP, FAO, etc.) group was put together to prepare the report, including both statistical processes and analytical capabilities. But the efforts to build upon this dynamic to coordinate an ambitious regional capability programme have not yet achieved practical results.

The need for national environmental statistics, and particularly for MDG7 monitoring, presents a great challenge but also an opportunity for the institutionalization of environmental statistics in most LAC countries. This requires a better systematization of inter-institutional work at the national level, the coordination and strengthening of capacity building, and the capitalization of technical capacities and synergies with other national and international initiatives. This is the best practice of the countries that have advanced in the production and use of environmental statistics within the region.

Currently, a regional effort is being made in order to produce supplementary indicators within the MDG framework that better capture the LAC environmental sustainability issues and concerns. These supplementary indicators and their metadata would constitute a practical and methodological reference for the countries that wish to include them in their national initiatives and official reporting.

On all these aspects, LAC countries can and must develop their own statistical systems within the national statistical systems, so that data production and dissemination can become a well structured, high quality, permanent process within the nations. This implies that a considerable regional effort has to be made, in order to capitalize prior national ad-hoc teams that are organized for the production of specific results (environmental statistics compendia, sets of environmental indicators, results of environmental accounting exercises) into permanent, institutionalized processes, with the participation of different agencies and experts. In this way, countries can make better use of scarce resources and fully synergize their efforts. This calls for political commitment in terms of budget allocation and investment in technical capacities and team sustainability, just as in its own time, economic and social statistical systems required and achieved.

Source: Elaboration of authors based on the contribution of Rayen Quiroga

F. Opportunities for statistical development in the region

With regard to opportunities to strengthen national statistical systems, in many countries follow-up to the MDGs has helped to generate discussion on the importance of statistical information in the development process. The opportunities for the production of comparable, good-quality indicators can be grouped in the following categories:

(i) Promotion of statistical activities;
(ii) Financial support for national statistical systems;
(iii) Improvement of the technical quality of statistical products; and
(iv) Regional harmonization of statistics.

Indeed, the follow-up to the MDGs represents an opportunity to promote statistical bodies, in particular NSOs, within national administrations. It is also a chance to facilitate contact between producers and users of statistics, and to increase political awareness of the importance of statistical

[18] Countries that have developed permanent environmental statistical production and dissemination includes Chile, Mexico, Brazil and Panama, whereas other nations are developing their systems having produced excellent products both in statistics and indicators, including Colombia, Argentina, Peru, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Guatemala.

information in the planning of development programmes. The promotion of the role of statistics as a function of universal targets also ties in with the countries' efforts to follow up international summits (World Summit for Children, International Conference on Population and Development, World Conference on Women, World Assembly on Ageing, and the World Summit on the Information Society).

From the point of view of specific subject areas, follow-up to the MDGs can help to strengthen statistical systems in the social (poverty, education, health and gender, see Box 4 and environmental areas (see Box 3 again), relative to the more traditional approach dominated by economic statistics. As stated in Annex 1, supplementary MDGs indicators are well suited to draw a more precise picture for the LAC region. This will allow NSOs to bring to the attention of both their authorities and their users the need to implement, maintain and improve systems for producing social and environmental information within the national statistical system (basically through systematic survey operations and the statistical use of quality administrative records).

Box 4

MDG MONITORING AND THE GENDER ISSUES

The Millennium Declaration establishes gender equality and the empowerment of women as an explicit goal. It is also a central requisite to achieve the rest of the Millennium Development Goals. The indicators to monitor the progress of progress this goal are: the ratio of boys and girls at all levels of education; the ratio of literacy between men and women between 15 and 24 years of age, the percentage of women in waged employment in the non-agricultural sector and the percentage of women holding seats in national parliament. The available information from international organisms show that 100% of these indicators can be calculated in 14 countries of Latin America and almost every country has the statistical information needed to calculate more than 80% of the indicators. As far as the Caribbean countries are concerned, the relevant information appears to be scarcer, and only two countries have enough information to calculate all the relevant indicators.

ECLAC has suggested "complementary" and "additional" indicators given that sex-desegregation is not always enough to adequately measure gender equality. A complementary indicator is a counterpart to the official indicator from the gender perspective which provides information on an additional dimension relevant to a certain phenomena; an additional indicator is proposed when there is no official indicator that measures the gender dimension of a social phenomena. Complementary indicators include: (i) the literacy ratio among women and men older than 15 years of age, (ii) the percentage of women and men employed in low productivity sectors, (iii) a binary indicator to show if the country has a quota law for women in the Parliament. Additional indicators comprise: (i) female unemployment rate, (ii) labour income ratio between men and women, (iii) female and male participation in household domestic activities, (iv) average hours dedicated to household activities, according to the average hours dedicated to market activities, (v) global fertility rate, (vi) unmet family planning demand, (vii) percentage of unwanted pregnancies, (viii) percentage of women who suffered physical, psychological or sexual violence from her husband.

The information available within international organizations allows to estimate that, in the case of complementary indicators, 17 countries of Latin America have information to calculate 100% of them. As far as additional indicators are concerned, 13 countries have the information needed to measure at least 60% of the indicators. Regarding sexual and reproductive rights, approximately 12 countries have enough information to calculate the particular indicators. As far as labour market indicators almost every country had information regarding the situation of the women. Finally in the case of violence against women many countries have carry on initiatives to measure it, nevertheless only 5 of them produce regionally/internationally comparable information.

Time use surveys are among the most important sources of information not fully developed in the majority of the countries of the region. These surveys allow to have detailed information about how women and men distribute their time between paid and non-paid activities. Several countries in the region have experiences at the national level with this kind of survey, see for instance the ECLAC Social Panorama 2002-2003 (Box iii.1) or http://www.eclac.cl/mujer/noticias/noticias/4/24634/OTacla. pdf

Source: Elaboration of authors based on the contribution of Daniela Zapata

There are a number of initiatives in the region that support the preparation of materials to promote statistical systems. For example PARIS21, with the support of the World Bank, IDB and ECLAC, has conducted subregional seminars in Central America and the Andean countries, bringing together producers and users of statistics for development. These seminars transmit to decision makers the message that "if development cannot be measured, it cannot be managed". It is essential that governments lend formal support to national statistical systems in the form of budgetary, technical and human resources, and by promoting cooperation between producers and users.

The declaration signed by the heads of the multilateral development banks in Monterrey, Mexico in March 2002 explicitly refers to the need to support statistical systems as institutional tools for following up the MDGs and national poverty reduction strategies. Within each country, the NSO can also take advantage of the rallying of producers, users and financiers around the issue of follow-up to the MDGs (with inter-agency task forces and the preparation of national reports, for example) to mobilize resources to improve the operation of the national statistical system.

In 2004, the Second Roundtable on Measuring for Development Results called for increasing political and financial commitment to support MDG monitoring capacity. They agreed on a set of six actions, coordinated into what came to be known as the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (see Box 5).

Box 5

THE MARRAKECH ACTION PLAN FOR STATISTICS

The Second Roundtable on Measuring for Development Results took place in Marrakech, Morocco in February 2004. Nearly 200 participants from aid organizations and developing countries met in a roundtable to assess progress, focus on the challenges countries face in managing for results, and attempt to increase the political commitment of the international community to support the global results agenda. The Roundtable participants endorsed the core principles and a global action plan on managing for development results. In addition, participants agreed on a global plan for statistics (the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics) which consists of six actions.

The first set of actions, of special relevance to the present document, addresses national needs:

- Mainstream strategic planning of statistical systems and prepare national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS) for all low-income countries by 2006
- Begin preparations for the 2010 census round
- Increase financing for statistical capacity building

The second set of actions addresses international responsibilities:

- Set up an International Household Survey Network
- Undertake urgent improvements needed for monitoring the MDGs
- Increase accountability of the international statistical system.

The implementation is estimated to cost an additional $148 million per year in total, according to the following evaluation:

* Action 1: Mainstream strategic planning - $10m
* Action 2: Prepare for 2010 census round - $5m
* Action 3: Implement strategies (NSDS) - $118m
* Action 4: Set up Household Survey Network - $5m
* Action 5: Improve MDG monitoring – $8m
* Action 6: Improve international accountability – n/a

Source: Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (www.web.worldbank.org)

At the international level, several financial support programmes have been created in the form of loans and subsidies, such as the statistical capacity building project (STATCAP) and the Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (TFSCB). In the region, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and the CARICOM member States have benefited from TFSCB to conduct social surveys. Other forms of financial support are available from UNDP and bilateral development cooperation agencies. A number of private foundations, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which supports the Health Metrics Network, also provide funds for improving follow-up to the MDGs.

Last but not least, ECLAC mobilized resources from the United Nations Development Account, to implement a multilateral project on "Strengthening capacity in Latin America and the Caribbean to monitor the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals". The activities have a strong statistical

component and will be financed for the 2005-2007 period to provide technical capacity-building for information production and analysis for monitoring MDG goals at the national level. As part of its activities, the project aims at strengthening the role of national statistics bureaus in MDG follow-up and identifying the actions necessary to meet the monitoring challenges. (see Box 6).

The ECLAC project regularly evaluates the information available to track MDG advances in countries of the region, and look at specific measures to increase national data availability.[19] Concerning the proposal for complementary MDG indicators, the project has focused on the subjects of gender, education and environment. The documents that describe the initial versions of these proposals have been presented and discussed at corresponding experts' regional meetings. Technical assistance covers both regional training and country missions. In addition, the project revises the inclusion of national data sources in the data bases and reports of international entities, with the objective of proposing ways to improve coordination between national and international agencies

Box 6

REGIONAL PROJECT ON STRENGTHENING THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES MONITORING CAPACITY

This multilateral project "Strengthening capacity in Latin America and the Caribbean to monitor the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals" will be receiving funding for the 2005-2007 period from the United Nations Development Account, which provides technical capacity-building for information production and analysis for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals at the national level.

The objective of this ECLAC project, with a strong statistical orientation, is strengthening the capacity of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to reach the MDGs adjusted according to the reality of Latin American countries, through improving the quality and pertinence of the information for monitoring the targets.

Its expected accomplishments are:

(1) Strengthened capacity of governmental institutions to produce and analyze MDGs indicators and use them in the design and implementation of public policies that lead to the fulfillment of the goals.

(2) Adoption by LAC countries an extended set of MDGs indicators that are more suitable to their situation, in order to monitor the accomplishment of the MDGs.

(3) Better monitoring of the progress towards the accomplishment of the MDGs in the region through the production and compilation of information.

(4) Improved access to information and widespread knowledge about the MDGs and related issues.

The activities contemplated by the project are the following:

- Technical assistance to national institutions;
- Training workshops on the collection, process, and analysis of information corresponding to the implementation of the MDGs for staff of national public institutions responsible for official statistics;
- Regional meetings to discuss the implementation of the MDGs in LAC countries; Formulation of proposals for adapting the MDGs to the Latin American reality and dissemination of the proposals among countries in the region;
- Creation of a database and an internet web-site for follow-up indicators and complementary data along with other relevant information to be administered by ECLAC;
- Evaluation of the process towards the fulfillment of the MDGs using the previously defined methodologies and indicators;
- Preparation of reports with analysis and recommendations on the implementation of the MDGs in LAC countries.

The MDG website and database is available in English and Spanish on ECLAC's website at www.eclac.org/mdg. The website offers access to different MDG-related documents, as well as to data for the follow-up of development targets, which is contained in ECLAC's Social Statistics and Indicators Database (BADEINSO). This data is derived from international sources as well as countries' household surveys.

Source: Elaboration of authors based on the contribution of Xavier Mancero

Promotion of statistical activities is not restricted to building capacity from a strictly formal or physical viewpoint. Indeed, intangible beneficial effects linked to the MDGs synergies can also

[19] Information used in the present reports uses the outcome of a related meeting organised in Santiago in November 2006.

help to improve the quality of statistical outputs. This may result, for example, from the activities involved in sharing and disseminating methodologies, and from the more frequent contacts with other producers and users of statistics. Closing the distance between data producers and users thanks to the preparation of MDG reports or national poverty reduction strategies, can encourage NSOs to assess the quality of statistical sources and seek to improve it. As a matter of facts, NSOs in the region have been reviewing at regular intervals their methodological difficulties as part of the process of following up the MDGs.[20] Specialized agencies are also working to systematize and disseminate methodological documents on the different indicators that can be useful for technical staff in national statistical systems.

In the same vein, follow-up to the MDGs offers an opportunity to coordinate the dissemination of indicators and metadata for the regional and international harmonization of statistics. A common set of development indicators permits forms of dissemination that are convenient for all the countries. The efforts of national statistical systems to produce indicators using international methodologies automatically generate a set of statistical data that are not only more comparable —notwithstanding the difficulties inherent to the process— but also that in general are of better quality than the data produced initially according to sui generis methodologies. This because, in the process of adopting international methodologies, NSOs experts learn from their peers from neighbouring countries and are able to correct their errors.

It has been mentioned that the discussion among national experts of common technical difficulties, such as the production of the more problematic indicators, and the study of the methodological issues mentioned, can pave the way to greater cooperation among NSOs and the sharing of best practices. Such discussion cannot surge spontaneously and appropriate forums are to be provided in order for the synergies to take effect. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the SCA should provide this forum, and promote these objectives.

G. Guidelines to take advantage of existing opportunities for statistical development

Potentials are just that, and can be realized only if and when a series of concrete steps are taken to materialize them. If the potential of the MDGs to foster statistical development is to be realized, it is necessary to prepare multiyear strategic plans that engage all the statistics-generating agencies in each Latin American and Caribbean country. Such an approach is promoted, inter alia, by PARIS21. In the region, it is currently applied with the assistance of PARIS21 in Central American and Andean countries. ECLAC offers also technical assistance to a number of countries that are willing to develop their population census and household survey capabilities within an integrated master plan.

Statistical development plans should include at least the following issues:

(i)Analysis of the current situation of the NSO and of the other statistical services;

(ii)Mission and vision of the NSO, particularly its role with respect to development;

(iii)Strategic objectives for long-term development;

(iv)A multiyear plan of activities; and

(v)The human, physical and financial resources required.

[20] As mentioned, in 2005 and 2006 ECLAC has implemented a regional project devoted to these aspects, and the SCA decided to create a working group especially devoted to analysing the statistical aspect specific to the MDGs. All these regional initiatives provide regional forum where national experiences can be confronted and best practices exchanged.

A national statistical development strategy may serve as a "public relation tool" for raising funds, either from national governments or from external donors. Indeed, preparing such a national strategy forms part of the requirements for gaining access to financial mechanisms such as STATCAP. TFSCB can fund its preparation, all of which adds further incentives for the countries of the region to embark on such planning exercise. Cervera-Ferri (2005) states that the SCA could consider examining how useful the material prepared by international task forces, such as PARIS21,[21] would be in preparing national statistical development strategies in Latin American and Caribbean countries.

A national statistical plan starts by analysing the current situation not only of the NSO, but also of the other official statistical services, and by mapping their interactions (or, as is unfortunately often the case, by pointing out the lack of interactions and coordination). As already mentioned in various parts of this document, the coordination of the national statistical system is essential for an effective and efficient follow-up to the MDGs. NSOs do not and cannot provide all the statistical sources for this follow-up. In most of the countries, the ministries of education, health and the environment, which play a key role in the maintenance of administrative records, are involved in providing the basic information. Other institutions dealing with environment, or gender issues, may also produce statistical information on the MDGs, their base line and their current advancement.

The legal and institutional framework for the planning of statistical activities should enable the NSO to coordinate its activities with the line ministries responsible for maintaining administrative records likely to be used for statistics. Coordination should be based on mutual collaboration among peers, with the NSO contributing its experience in producing, analysing and disseminating statistics, and the respective ministry contributing its knowledge of the use of statistics for decision making and its structure for data collection and processing.

Throughout this paper, it has been reiterated that the MDGs and their follow-up are an opportunity to promote the function of statistics in the countries of the region. Promotion campaigns should thus be a strategic priority. Since promotion campaigns are expensive to produce and the situation is similar in many countries (including the language spoken), economies of scale exist that could be exploited at the regional level to prepare materials. In this regard, the PARIS21 initiative of preparing videos and national and regional seminars should be structured and extended to the national level.

Latin American and Caribbean countries might consider the following points of coordination:

(i) The creation of inter-agency task forces on education and health, involving both the NSO and the ministries or relevant national authorities, to analyse the indicators found to be most problematic (population below the minimum level of dietary energy consumption, schooling completion rate, school attendance by orphaned children, prevalence of HIV/AIDS, contraceptive use, incidence and treatment of malaria, and so forth).

(ii) A study of the consistency of data from household surveys and administrative records, essentially in the areas of education (level of schooling, enrolment and school attendance) and health status (e.g., perinatal check-ups and maternal health, notifiable diseases, child immunization, maternal and infant mortality), and of the possibilities of combining and consolidating findings from administrative records and household surveys (for example with reference to school attendance).

[21] Available at http://www.paris21.org/pages/designing-nsds/NSDS-documents-knowledge-base/index.asp?tab=Knowledge Base.

(iii) Provision of training by the NSO for the technical staff working the ministries and producing sectorial and administrative statistics. As well as strengthening data collection and analysis, this would promote the sharing of common classifications and definitions. As the SCA Executive Committee reiterated in its 6th meeting in Madrid,[22] harmonization of national practices should always take international norms and best practices as their benchmark. Broader training is also needed in areas that make intensive use of data and data analysis, such as censuses and household surveys.

The first line of action concerns censuses, as a base for any other statistical operations requiring sampling. Population and housing censuses are enormous operations in terms of human, technical and financial resources, and they require careful planning over the medium term. In the Marrakech plan of action (MAPS), censuses are rightly considered fundamental for following up the MDGs. The region's programme of international statistical work includes the organization of censuses (with the very active engagement of the ECLAC Population Division, often referred to as the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre, CELADE). There are also regional experiences of international cooperation in this regard (including training, the dissemination of software such as REDATAM and the harmonization of definitions, among others).[23]

Among its technical recommendations, the SCA could look specifically at the use of census data for producing MDG indicators and, with regard to geographical monitoring of the socio-economic situation, for the breakdown of indicators using small area estimates (disaggregation by urban/rural residence and for slum-dwellers, among others).

The population censuses provide the statistical basis for designing other surveys, such as household surveys, but also health related and time use surveys. All the countries of the region conduct periodic household surveys. But a survey system is much more than this: it requires at least a fixed regularity, harmonized definitions and modalities of population coverage that enable data to be integrated.[24] In the case of the MDGs, whose time span ranges from 1990 to 2015, the sources of information need to be stable, or at least compatible, throughout the follow-up period.

Some regional initiatives, such as the MECOVI programme, provide a valuable experience of cooperation in the region that is worthwhile preserving. Synergies with other initiatives, such as STATCAP, in the framework of regional coordination of cooperation programmes, could improve the use of economic resources for the household survey system.

The creation of networks of household survey experts (as proposed in the MAPS) could help to strengthen survey systems through the sharing of technical experiences. In the region, the Network of Institutions and Experts on Social and Environmental Statistics (REDESA), an ECLAC initiative, aims to promote the production of such statistics, improve coordination among the production, dissemination and use of the data, and provide a forum for dialogue on related issues. REDESA also provides statistics on social and environmental issues. The SCA could assess the value of building on the dynamic generated by this network and examine the possibility of broadening it in the framework of MAPS.

Many of the Latin American and Caribbean countries have experience in conducting demographic and health surveys and other similar tasks. This experience could be advantageous for the rest of the countries in the region and could be included in the bilateral cooperation activities

[22] http://www.eclac.cl/deype/ceacepal/index2.htm

[23] For example, the MERCOSUR countries, Bolivia and Chile are working on the subregional harmonization of variables and pilot experiences.

[24] On the establishment of an integrated household survey system, see the methodological document prepared by J.C. Feres, and F. Medina, titled "Hacia un sistema integrado de encuestas de hogares en los países de América Latina", Estudios estadísticos y prospectivos series, No. 1 (LC/L.1476-P/E), Santiago, Chile, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2001, which systematizes the technical elements required (core surveys, elements of the design of statistical operations, quality control and implementation of operations).

promoted by the SCA. The Conference might also consider the possibility of adapting multiple indicators cluster surveys, with which the region has less experience, to the needs of the countries regarding indicators for the MDGs.

The countries' experience with time use surveys is more recent, although there are some interesting examples in the region (see again Box 4 on MDG monitoring and the gender issues). Consideration could be given to the use of such household surveys for the following issues: distribution of expenditures and consumption within the household by sex, estimation of unpaid work (production, maintenance and paramedical attention, especially by women), boys' and girls' attendance at school and, in general, any analysis that can afford a gender perspective to follow-up the MDGs.

While the censuses and the surveys provide for the most basic statistics, they cannot cover all aspects. In some cases, the information can be collected more efficiently from administrative sources, as it is the case for vital statistics. Nevertheless, collecting useful administrative information for statistical purpose is still a challenge in most countries of the region.[25]

Indeed, one of the many weaknesses observed in the indicators for the MDGs is a shortfall in their capacity to analyse the causes of maternal and infant mortality. As a by-product of administrative activities, these indicators should be less costly to obtain than survey data, but their usefulness is usually limited by the fact that the primary data collected under vital statistics are often of poor quality from a statistical standpoint. In the case of maternal mortality, the situation is worsened by shortcomings in the declarations of the cause of death and by apprehension on the part of the medical profession with regard to assuming the responsibility for maternal deaths. Analysis of consistency with demographic and health surveys would help to identify the population groups or geographical areas in which the coverage of records is poorest.

There are few indicators on HIV/AIDS in the region and in general the countries have not reviewed the methodology specifically for follow-up to the MDGs. These indicators are usually obtained from sentinel surveys. Methods of data collection and estimation vary, making it difficult to monitor the target and impairing international comparability. The SCA could consider recommending the creation of an expert group to propose strategies to obtain systematic and regular data on the prevalence and incidence of HIV/AIDS and to suggest harmonized methods for collecting these indicators.

Similarly, educational records can provide valuable, low-cost information if they are well designed and properly kept. Household surveys should define level of schooling and literacy in such a way that information can be crossed and different analyses of consistency with education records in the primary school age population can be conducted. The SCA could consider the possibility of issuing recommendations on the preparation of definitions to be used in the region's education systems and harmonizing national practices.

The ECLAC databases on social and environmental statistics[26] can be used to improve the availability of indicators on Goals 1 to 7. They can also serve to drive the regional effort to create a coherent framework for environmental indicators.

H. Dissemination of statistical information and user relation

[25] On the establishment of an integrated household survey system, see the methodological document prepared by J.C. Feres, and F. Medina, titled "Hacia un sistema integrado de encuestas de hogares en los países de América Latina", Estudios estadísticos y prospectivos series, No. 1 (LC/L.1476-P/E), Santiago, Chile, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2001, which systematizes the technical elements required (core surveys, elements of the design of statistical operations, quality control and implementation of operations).

[26] BADEINSO and BADEIMA, now integrated into the portal CEPALSTAT at http://websie.eclac.cl/sisgen/ConsultaIntegrada.asp

The demand for indicators on the MDGs is not confined to international institutions and national governments. Indeed, the generalization of disseminating data via internet website has greatly improved the possibility to reach a large number of potential users, outside the technical circles. In particular, many Non Governmental Organizations, representing a wide range of sectorial and specific interests within the civil society also have an interest in them. Unless these groups of users have the necessary statistical literacy to understand and exploit the data, then the statistics produced will be under or misused. Indeed, promoting statistical literacy for non specialists working in official or non-governmental organizations should be part of the advocacy programme of NSOs. For advanced statistical analysis, they should also organize seminars on household surveys, their possibilities and limitations, aimed at more specialized users, such as academic researchers.

With the advance of statistical tools for data analysis,[27] researchers in social sciences need to access micro data. Some NSOs have experimented with the dissemination of anonymized microdata in "secure centres"[28] to which authorized researchers are granted access. ECLAC has worked actively with the countries of the region on the democratization of information with the creation of REDATAM census databases for broad use by local and national agencies and also for open access by the general public. ECLAC has also developed, for a more restricted use, a household surveys indicators dissemination system known as Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG). Some organizations, such as ORC Macro (which conducts demographic and health surveys), have a policy of facilitating access to data files over the Internet for more detailed analysis.

But accessing micro data poses a series of confidentiality issues. The SCA could look at modalities of disseminating individual or household data (microdata) in the region, bearing in mind legal constraints (security of access and anonymity of informers) and the situation of each country (especially smaller economies such as the Caribbean), as a first step to identifying experiences that could be applied to the dissemination of available household surveys and population censuses. Later, the SCA could use these experiences for preparing regional recommendations on the dissemination of micro data for the national statistical systems of the region.

For disseminating information on statistical sources and methods relevant to the MDGs, the SCA could consider the use of a standard presentation such as that proposed by the IMF in the Special Data Dissemination Standards (SDDS), or the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS), for population, education, health and poverty (which most of the countries of the region have adopted) [29] Another interesting example is the use in different thematic areas of the Data Quality Framework Assessment (DQAF) system, which was also instituted by the IMF.[30]

The SCA could also consider the possibility of defining an initial minimum set of metadata on MDG indicators and the differences between national and international definitions. Pursuant to the recommendation made by the Friends of the Chair at the 37th Statistical Commission in 2006, the international agencies should clearly document discrepancies with national data, to enable national authorities and users alike to gain a detailed understanding of the methodology used. The work already carried out by ECLAC as part of its regional project on strengthening statistical capacities for the monitoring of the MDGs (see Box 6 again) should provide the building blocks for bridging the gaps between national and international visions, needs and methodologies.

[27] Such as dynamic panel data analysis techniques to estimate socio-economic statistical models, or micro-simulations linked with Computable General Equilibrium analysis to asses the impact of structural policy on labour and household income.

[28] For example, Peru has made surveys on living conditions, poverty, health and fertility available to registered users at http://www.inei.gob.pe/srienaho/index.htm.

[29] In the region, 10 countries are SDDS subscribers: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay, while 19 are GDDS participants: Antigua & Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Bolivia, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, and Venezuela.

[30] The IMF has posted DQAF for national accounts, consumer and producer price indexes, government finance statistics and monetary and balance of payments statistics at http://dsbb.imf.org/Applications/web/dqrs/dqrsdqaf/. The World Bank and UNESCO have been working on the application of DQAF to the assessment and documentation of statistics on monetary poverty and education.

I.Conclusions

The aim of this document was to synthesize the results of an on-going research programme conducted by the ECLAC Statistics and Economic Projections. This programme was launched at the request of the IV Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas (SCA), held in Dallas, Texas in 2004. The regional activities gathered momentum in May 2005 with a joint IADB-World Bank-UNDP-ECLAC workshop entitled "National Statistics Offices face the Millennium Development Goals", held in 2005 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The information available to track MDG advances in countries of the region and the related strategic issues for the development of National Statistical System were revised in a special substantive session of the Third Plenary Session of the SCA in June 2005. A comprehensive report on the available results and findings of this research programme was published in Cervera-Ferri (2005). These results were updated and presented to the regional statistical community at a regional seminar on "National Statistics Offices and the Millennium Development Goals: A new look" organised by ECLAC in November 2006.

Many challenges were identified in analysing the capacity of the NSOs to follow-up the MDGs. They were summarized in the report as follows:

(i)Increasing the availability of data;

(ii)Mapping and expanding the use of existing data;

(iii)Making data more relevant to national policymaking;

(iv)Reducing time lag and ensuring medium- and long term continuity;

(v)Improving international comparability:

(vi)Securing the human and financial resources needed for the follow-up process.

These challenges are interrelated, and therefore the coordination of the national statistical systems should be viewed as a strategic priority. The following aspects of coordination call for particular attention: identification of actors and the division of responsibilities; leadership among the institutions that produce information; establishment of common technical standards; and best use from a systemic perspective of the existing technical and human resources.

Indeed, the multiplicity of actors involved in national statistical systems, particularly in relation to MDG indicators, requires institutional leadership. Given their area of expertise, NSOs are best placed to exercise this technical leadership and serves as the national “statistical clearing house” validating the exchange of data with international organizations. This coordination function should resolve many of the problems of discrepancy between national data and international indicators identified at both regional and world level, and reported to the 37th UN Statistical Commission in March 2006.

In addition to strengthening the systemic coherence of the various national statistical actors, the report identifies a series of technical issues that require specific attention in view of coordinating the monitoring of the MDGs. In particular, establishing common sampling frameworks for the preparation of household surveys, whether conducted by the NSO or by other institutions, and defining common concepts and data collection methods on educational and health related indicators. Household surveys are the main tool for monitoring the MDGs, and they should be build on a strong statistical basis that only population and housing censuses are able to provide. Often in the region, administrative records are still far from providing the needed information with the required statistical quality. The development of this third pillar of the national statistical system remains one of the main challenges facing the regional community.

Monitoring the MDGs provide the regional community with a series of opportunities to strengthen national statistical systems. For example, in many countries the follow-up to the MDGs has helped to generate discussion on the importance of statistical information in the development process. The opportunities can be grouped in the following categories:

(i)Promotion of statistical activities;

(ii)Financial support for national statistical systems;

(iii)Improvement of the technical quality of statistical products; and

(iv)Regional harmonization of statistics.

To realise these potentialities, it is necessary to prepare multiyear strategic plans that engage all the statistics-generating agencies in each Latin American and Caribbean country. The Statistical Conference of the Americas has taken the lead in this respect, by formally including the monitoring of the MDGs as one of the main dimension of its 2005-2015 strategic plan.

Indeed, the role of the SCA as the regional forum for the development of the statistical capabilities in Latin America and the Caribbean is central to advance on the several fronts: strengthening national capacities for monitoring the MDGs by promoting and coordinating multilateral technical assistance; harmonizing regional practices and definitions; and bridging the gap between the national and the international data.

Annexes

Annex 1 The Millennium Development Goals: list of indicators and targets

1. Initial list[a/]

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)	
Goals and Targets (from the Millennium Declaration)	**Indicators for monitoring progress**
Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	
Target 1: Halve, whose income is less than less than one dollar a day	1. Proportion of population below $1 (PPP) per day 2. Poverty gap ratio [incidence x depth of poverty] 3. Share of poorest quintile in national consumption
Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of	4. Prevalence of underweight children under-five years of age
people who suffer from hunger	5. Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education	
Target 3: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling	6. Net enrolment ratio in primary education 7a. Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5 7b. Primary completion rate 8. Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women	
Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015	9a. Ratio of girls to boys in primary education 9b. Ratio of girls to boys in secondary education 9c. Ratio of girls to boys in tertiary education 10. Ratio of literate women to men, 15-24 years old 11. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector 12. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality	
Target 5: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate	13. Under-five mortality rate 14. Infant mortality rate 15.Proportion of 1 year-old children immunised against measles
Goal 5: Improve maternal health	
Target 6: Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio	16. Maternal mortality ratio 17.Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	
Target 7: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS	18. HIV prevalence among pregnant women aged 15-24 years 19. Condom use rate of the contraceptive prevalence rate[a]
	19a. Condom use at last high-risk sex 19b. Percentage of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS[b] 19c. Contraceptive prevalence rate 20. Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10-14 years
Target 8: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases	21a. Malaria prevalence, notified cases per 100,000 population 21b. Malaria death rate per 100,000, ages 0-4 22a.Proportion of population in malaria-risk areas using effective malaria prevention measures[c] 22b. Proportion of population in malaria-risk areas using effective malaria treatment measures. 23a.Tuberculosis incidence rates. 23b. Tuberculosis prevalence rate per 100,000 population. 24a. Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected under directly observed treatment short course DOTS (Internationally recommended TB control strategy) 24b. Proportion of tuberculosis cases cured under DOTS.
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability	
Target 9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources	25.Proportion of land area covered by forest 26. Ratio of area protected to maintain biological diversity to surface area 27. Energy use (kg oil equivalent) per $1 GDP (PPP) 28a. Carbon dioxide emissions per capita 28b. Consumption of ozone-depleting CFCs (ODP tons) 29. Proportion of population using solid fuels
Target 10: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation	30a. Proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source, urban 30b. Proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source, rural. 31a.Proportion of population with access to improved sanitation, urban 31b. Proportion of population with access to improved sanitation, rural
Target 11: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers	32. Proportion of households with access to secure tenure
Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development [b/]	
Target 12: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – both nationally and internationally	Some of the indicators listed below are monitored separately for the least developed countries (LDCs), Africa, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States Official development assistance (ODA)

	33a.ODA, net, as a percentage of OECD/DAC donors' GNI
Target 13: Address the special needs of the least developed countries Includes: tariff and quota free access for the least developed countries' exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction	33b. ODA to LDCs, net, as a percentage of OECD/DAC donors' gross national income. 35.Proportion of bilateral official development assistance of OECD/DAC donors that is untied 36. ODA received in landlocked developing countries as a proportion of their gross national incomes 37. ODA received in small island developing States as a proportion of their gross national incomes
Target 14: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly)	Market access 38. Proportion of total developed country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries and least developed countries, admitted free of duty
Target 15: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term	39.Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products and textiles and clothing from developing countries 40. Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as a percentage of their gross domestic product 41. Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity Debt sustainability 42. Total number of countries that have reached their HIPC decision points and number that have reached their HIPC completion points (cumulative) 43. Debt relief committed under HIPC Initiative 44. Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services
Target 16: In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth	45.Unemployment rate of young people aged 15-24 years, each sex and total
Target 17: In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries	46. Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis
Target 18: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications	47a. Telephone lines per 100 population 47b. Cellular subscribers per 100 population 48a. Personal computers in use per 100 population 48b. Internet users per 100 population

Source: United Nations Secretariat

Notes: a/The list does not include the proposal for new targets. b/ Goal number 8 refers to official development assistance. It is not analysed in this document, as its monitoring comes from statistics compiled by international agencies (see for example http://www.mdg-trade.org on market access).

2. Proposals for new targets and complementary indicators

a. New targets

At the 2005 World Summit, World leaders agreed to add several other important targets to supplement the initial MDGs list. The Secretary General recommended in his 2006 report to the General Assembly the incorporation of these commitments into the set of targets used to follow up on the Millennium Declaration.

This includes: a new target under Millennium Development Goal 1: to make the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people, a central objective of our relevant national and international policies and our national development strategies; a new target under Goal 5: to achieve universal access to reproductive health by 2015; a new target under Goal 6: to come as close as possible to universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS by 2010 for all those who need it; and a new target under Goal 7: to significantly reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010. The existing target on developing decent and productive work for youth, now under Millennium Development Goal 8, would be encompassed by the new target under Goal 1 (see UN General Assembly, 2006, paragraph 24).

The technical work needed to select the appropriate indicators would be undertaken by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goal Indicators (IAEG). The IAEG is expected to finalize a proposal during 2007 and present it to the Statist.

b.Complementary indicators

It was already mentioned that many countries collect data that may diverge from the 48 official MDGs set of indicators in order to monitor their national official development policies and specific programmes. These national policies, such as employment for young people, gender equity or national poverty reduction strategies, call for ad-hoc quantitative information in order to establish base lines, monitor trends and evaluate impacts. In addition, in many countries a process is emerging, whereby NGOs pioneer new indicators. Once the usefulness of these indicators is established, the responsibility of collecting them will pass to the national statistical system.

The survey responses received by ECLAC showed that the official MDG indicators used to monitor poverty, education, living conditions and access to information and communications technologies were generally simpler than those required at the national level. The MDG indicators referring to HIV/AIDS and other diseases, access to essential medicines and sustainable development coincide little with those requested at the national level. These indicators may differ from the official MDGs and imply extra work for the NSOs, but they also provide useful complementary information. In this respect, an important challenge for the NSOs is to build these indicators at the requested level of disaggregation (e.g., broken-down by sex, age groups, area of residence, ethnic minorities, and so on).

At regional level, there is also a need to supplement the official MDGs indicators with a set of indicators that may reflect better the specific situation and challenges of the Latin American and Caribbean region. One of the objectives of the on-going ECLAC project for strengthening the regional capacity to monitor the MDGs is to adapt the indicators to the regional situation, focusing in particular on four dimensions: Poverty, education, gender and environment.

The ECLAC proposal for an "augmented" monitoring of the MDGs is articulated around a series on new indicators classified as Complementary (counterpart of the official indicator, but providing extra information on a particular dimension of the phenomenon –sex, age group) and as Additional (when no official indicator provides an adequate view of the phenomenon). A third categories includes the Suggested indicators, which are deemed of high relevance but may not be collected in all countries due to lack of information.

In November 2006, a preliminary list of indicators in education, gender and environment was presented by the ECLAC project and discussed by regional experts.31 After being validated through a

[31] Relevant documentation (in Spanish) on the complementary and additional indicators presented in November 2006 at the ECLAC seminar on Challenges in Monitoring Targets of the Millennium Development Goals can be found at the ECLAC MDG portal : http://www.eclac.cl/mdg/default_en.htm

continuous dialogue with the regional statistical community, the list of supplementary indicators will be published in 2007.

Annex 2. The MDGs in the design of the Statistical Conference of the Americas Strategic Plan 2005-2015

The purpose of the strategic plan 2005-2015 is to guide the activities of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC (SCA), in support of the development of official statistics in Latin America and the Caribbean. This document reassesses the main priorities identified by members of the Conference and the trends emerging from various studies. The year 2015 was chosen as the reference for the strategic vision on the basis of the timeframe associated with the Millennium Development Goals, which constitute a significant challenge for the region's national statistical systems in terms of the need to develop an appropriate information system for follow-up of the Goals. There are also the preparations for the 2010 round of censuses, the implementation of the System of National Accounts (1993 SNA) in all the countries of the region and the review of methodology scheduled for 2008.

These joint challenges will give rise to synergies in terms of regional and international cooperation. At its third meeting, the Conference recognized that those three challenges should constitute the guiding principles of the strategic plan over the next 10 years.

Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan highlight the technical aspects of this challenge.[32]

Goal 3: To promote the development of technical and methodological capacities in order to generate high-quality statistical information in the region.

This strategic goal encompasses the following specific goals:

1. Promote cooperation and the exchange of experiences on worldwide best practices and methodological documents useful for the region in terms of the production of statistical information.

2. Support and promote the implementation of the 2010 round of population and housing censuses in the countries of the region.

3. Contribute to the development of the sociodemographic and gender statistics needed to monitor progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

4. Support and promote the implementation of the System of National Accounts (1993 SNA) in all the countries of the region and the revision process scheduled for 2008, in accordance with a regional schedule of stages.

5. Ensuring that all countries, according to their circumstances, have relevant statistics on their natural resources and environment, in addition to a minimum set of common sustainability indicators for the region as a whole;

6. Ensuring that all countries, according to their circumstances, have relevant statistics on science and technology, in addition to a minimum set of common indicators for the region as a whole;

In order to achieve these goals, the following lines of action should be undertaken:

[32] Other goals are: Goal 1: To strengthen the strategic and operational management practices and organization of the national statistical offices and national statistical systems in order to ensure the quality of their outputs and the satisfaction of users. Goal 2: To promote the training of staff in producing statistical information, managing national statistical systems and carrying out research into statistical methodology. Goal 4: Promote coordination and cooperation between the member countries of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC and international agencies.

1. Compile reference materials on methodologies, including information on best practices for statistical information production in each area, and automate and disseminate these reference materials.

2. By 2007, to prepare a document containing technical, logistic and financing recommendations for preparation of the population and housing censuses for 2005-2015.

3. To hold workshops and encourage different forms of cooperation that allow a sharing of experiences in relation to preparatory work for the population and housing censuses in the region.

4. Develop alternative and complementary methods incorporating censuses, surveys and administrative records to improve the production of sociodemographic statistics.

5. Take advantage of the attention given to the Millennium Development Goals to consolidate and systematize sociodemographic and gender statistics.

6. Coordinate efforts to conduct research on statistical issues in the region.

7. Provide a diagnostic analysis of the development of the System of National Accounts in the countries and its technical and institutional linkages with the production of economic statistics.

8. Generate recommendations and support initiatives that contribute to the full implementation of the System of National Accounts (1993 SNA) in all the countries of the region and the revision process scheduled for 2008.

9. Exchange experiences and best practices for the development of statistics on natural resources and the environment and encourage the implementation of a minimum set of common sustainability indicators for the region as a whole.

10. Exchange experiences and best practices for the development of statistics on science and technology and encourage the implementation of a minimum set of common science and technology indicators for the region as a whole.

Source: Final draft strategic plan 2005-2015 (LC/L.2575) presented at the Sixth Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; Madrid, 25 and 26 September 2006.

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