

3rd Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

Project: *Strengthening Capacity for Evidence-Based Policymaking and the Economic Resilience of CARICOM*

27 January 2025

Participants

Antigua and Barbuda - Garicia Mack; Saint Kitts and Nevis - Vanroy Agard; Saint Lucia: Arnold Lafeuille; Saint Kitts and Nevis - Vanroy Agard; CARICOM - Timothy Odle; Reanata Ramsey; Kevin Sears; ECCB - Prunela Charles-Williams; OECS - Delores Francis; UN ECLAC - Sheldon Mclean; Maria Alejandra Ovalle; UNCTAD - Bruno Antunes; Petra Kynclova; Peter Lunenborg; Benny Salo; Dong Wu.

Agenda

- Agreeing on the agenda.
- Reviewing comments on the last meeting minutes.
- **Statistics element:**
 - Timeframe and next steps for testing the TiSSTAT system by countries.
 - Planning an online training workshop to assist countries during the testing phase:
 - Timing.
 - Content.
 - Identification of NSO statistical points and nominated IT specialists for the testing phase.
 - Related TiSSTAT documents available for countries.
- **Policy element:**
 - Discussing priority sectors for analysis.
 - Confirming national focal points for the policy component.
- Any Other Business (A.O.B.).

Discussion

- The Steering Committee will meet quarterly throughout 2025.
- The current meeting serves as the first for the year; subsequent meeting dates will be confirmed later.

Statistics Element

- **Expected timeline** was presented with activities planned for 2025. The timeline will be shared with the meeting participants.
- UNCTAD will provide an **exploration/testing environment** hosted on their servers. This allows countries to explore the TISSTAT system without requiring local deployment.
- UNCTAD is planning an **online training** to share the exploration/testing environment with countries and explore TISSTAT functionalities:
 - Scheduled for two half-days during the week of **February 17-24, 2025**.
 - [Doodle form](#) with proposed dates and times was sent to statistical focal points ahead of the Steering Committee meeting. Only a few responses received and a kind reminder will be sent, including policy focal points and other interested participants.
 - The training will take place over two half-days as following:
 - Day 1: Exploration environment introduction, including access and initial usage.
 - Day 2: Advanced topics like data cleaning, analysis, and reporting.
 - Participants will receive pre-configured usernames, passwords, and a guide with instructions to navigate the system. The configuration will be sent to the project's statistical focal points to share with respective experts.
 - The training targets statistical experts but Member States are encouraged to invite non-statistical focal points if relevant.
- A comprehensive publication detailing TISSTAT functionalities and methodologies was prepared in 2024. However, it is pending final approval by the UNCTAD Publication Division. The document will be shared with participants as soon as it is released.
- UNCTAD will host **monthly online meetings** following the February training sessions. These meetings aim to provide continuous support and serve as a collaborative platform for participating countries to address challenges and share progress. The insights gained during the monthly meetings will feed into the agenda for the November 2025 in-person workshop, ensuring it addresses the most pressing issues identified during the testing phase. Countries will have an opportunity to prepare for more advanced topics that may require pre-work or additional resources.
- An **in-person workshop** is tentatively planned for **November 2025**. This workshop will focus on ongoing TISSTAT implementation and capacity-building efforts. It will provide an opportunity to consolidate knowledge, address persistent challenges, and finalize preparations for the system's deployment in interested countries. The workshop will also focus on enabling participants to align TISSTAT with their national statistical and policy needs.
- An **in-person workshop** is tentatively planned for **November 2025**, guided by discussions from the monthly meetings leading up to it. The workshop will focus on ongoing TISSTAT implementation and capacity-building efforts while also accommodating countries that may prefer to integrate the questionnaire into their existing

statistical infrastructure rather than fully deploying the application. It will provide an opportunity to consolidate knowledge, address persistent challenges, and refine approaches based on each country's needs. The workshop will also help participants explore TISSTAT's functionalities and determine how best to align them with their national statistical and policy frameworks.

Followed discussion:

- Questions arose about whether countries would need specialized IT infrastructure or software installations during the exploration phase.
- UNCTAD clarified that the exploration environment will be hosted on UNCTAD's servers. This means countries do not need to install or host the system locally during the testing phase, significantly reducing immediate IT-related burdens.
- Access will be provided via a secure online platform, requiring only an internet connection, a browser, and basic user credentials.
- For long-term use, countries should host the TISSTAT system locally. This would involve securing a stable IT infrastructure to ensure data security and compliance with national standards. UNCTAD will share a detailed document outlining IT requirements for the full deployment phase.
- Technical guides and UNCTAD support will be provided to assist countries in this transition.

Next steps:

- UNCTAD will share relevant materials discussed during the meeting.
- UNCTAD will organize online trainings followed by regular monthly meetings to provide support to Member States.
- Confirm the dates for the in-person workshop to be organized in 2025.

Policy Element

- The discussion focused on selecting one sector for detailed policy analysis as part of the project's deliverables. This decision was driven by resource constraints, including time, budget, and personnel, which made it necessary to prioritize a single sector.
- Two sectors were considered: **cultural and creative services** and **professional services**. Both sectors are significant to the region's development, but they present distinct opportunities and challenges.
- The cultural and creative industries were acknowledged for their vital role in promoting local talent, preserving cultural heritage, and driving economic diversification. These sectors hold significant potential for global market positioning, particularly in areas such as music, festivals, publishing, and audiovisual production. They are integral to the

region's identity and development, offering unique opportunities for showcasing creativity and innovation.

- However, challenges such as high informality, inconsistent regional definitions, and resource-intensive data collection were identified as significant barriers. Many businesses in this sector operate informally, complicating efforts to collect reliable data and assess their contributions. Additionally, the lack of standardized definitions across Member States results in inconsistent analysis and policy alignment. These factors, combined with limited capacity to engage informal actors, rendered the cultural and creative industries less feasible for policy analysis within the current project's scope.
- Professional services, encompassing areas like architecture, engineering, medical professions, and legal services, are integral to economic growth due to their strong interlinkages with other sectors. For example, architects and engineers are vital for infrastructure development, medical professionals support health and wellness industries, and attorneys aid in regulatory compliance. These services play a pivotal role in enabling broader economic efficiency and development, making them a strategic focus for policy analysis.
- The sector's formalized structure and clear definitions, as outlined in international statistical frameworks like the Central Product Classification (CPC), simplify data collection and reporting. Its intersectoral linkages create significant spillover effects, enhancing growth in other industries. Additionally, the presence of regulatory bodies and professional associations ensures easier access to stakeholders and reliable data. These factors make professional services a highly feasible and practical choice for detailed analysis within the project's scope, as recognized by participants.
- While both sectors hold significant potential, **professional services** emerged as the preferred choice due to their clearer definitions, formalized structures, and greater feasibility for analysis within the project's scope. The final decision will be confirmed after further consultations and data review.
- The coordination between statistics and policy components plays a pivotal role. Statistical data collected through TISSTAT will directly support policy analysis and decision-making. Additionally, the policy advisory component will include a training module designed to equip countries with the methodology for sectoral analysis, ensuring that the approach can be replicated in other sectors beyond the project's timeline.

Next steps:

- UNCTAD will prepare a **comparative table** summarizing the economic contributions of the two sectors under consideration. This will include metrics like employment, trade performance, and intersectoral linkages.
- Member States will consult internally and confirm their final selection in the next Steering Committee meeting.

Any Other Business (AOB)

- **Updates from Dong Wu (UNCTAD):**

- UNCTAD's recent consultations with Jamaica and the Bahamas highlighted interest from additional CARICOM members. There are discussions on extending the benefits of this project to other countries in the region.
- UNCTAD is organizing a scoping meeting on a **Primer for Services and Trade Policies** on **February 6, 2025**. Invitations will be shared with participants.
- **The UNCTAD16 conference** is planned to be hosted by Vietnam in October 2025 bringing an opportunity to showcase the work on trade in services. The project's results could be prominently featured. UNCTAD seeks to involve CARICOM's Secretary General for broader regional representation.