

Results Profile: Latin America and Caribbean Statistical Systems



GETTING THE NUMBERS RIGHT

Better statistical systems help tailor poverty reduction programs in Latin America

Overview

Meaningful and lasting reductions in poverty require a clear understanding of the scope of the challenge—something that is impossible without accurate and timely data about populations and living standards. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) has for more than a decade worked with countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to develop or improve collection and analysis of statistics. These efforts have helped tailor poverty reduction efforts to countries' needs. At least 20 countries can now correctly estimate poverty data as a result of collaboration with the Bank.

Full Brief—5 Pages

[Getting the Numbers Right: Making Statistical Systems a Real Plus for Results—PDF, April 2010](#)

Challenge

Despite relatively high levels of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, investment in national statistical systems in Latin America and the Caribbean remains limited. Statistical agencies in many countries (with such notable exceptions as Mexico and Brazil) have limited capacity and are not able to take advantage of the latest technological advancements in data management and approaches for harmonizing information systems.

Approach

Since 2006, IBRD's Team for Statistical Development has helped countries in the region improve the supply of statistical information, increase the demand for it, and foster coordination between producers and users of statistical information. A major goal has been to improve the availability and comparability of basic statistics to support benchmarking social outcomes across countries, better targeting of social expenditures and the development of systematic monitoring and evaluation systems. IBRD's efforts are generally tied to other IBRD projects or initiatives, such as poverty assessments, non-lending technical assistance (financed with core knowledge funds or in most cases via Trust Funds), or in the case of Yucatán through a "fee-for-service" approach.

There are currently 15 approved Trust Fund operations,

More Results 

20

countries in Latin America and Caribbean can now correctly estimate poverty.

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- » LAC Team for Statistical Development
- » SEDLAC

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totaling \$4 million. Half of these approved trust funds are of regional scope and the other half are country specific. In addition, IBRD allocates a significant amount of staff time to build statistical capacity as a byproduct of analytical and advisory activities carried out in partnership with government counterparts.

Results

IBRD's work in statistics has been seminal to the series of improvements in terms of poverty measurement and overall quality of data in Latin America and the Caribbean. At least 20 countries can now correctly estimate poverty data as a result of collaboration with the Bank. In addition, IBRD assistance has helped achieve the following results:

- 14 countries created or are working on a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) with IBRD support and one state government in Mexico has created its own statistics strategy.
- Six Central American countries improved their household surveys on living standards.
- 100+ datasets have been documented within the Accelerated Data Program (ADP) and will be uploaded to the Regional Data Archive catalogue to be available for public use in 2010.
- Four countries in the region used poverty maps created by national statistical offices as a tool for targeting social programs
- 450+ household surveys are included in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) database
- 210 harmonized household surveys are included in the Socio-Economic Database for LAC (SEDLAC), a joint effort by the IBRD and the Universidad Nacional de La Plata in Argentina.

Toward the Future

In the years ahead, the Team for Statistical Development will continue to support countries with the aim of strengthening statistical capacity to improve monitoring and evaluation. The recent economic crisis underscored the need for more frequent and rapidly processed information on socio-economic conditions of households in order to design appropriate crisis response programs. Nicaragua and Guatemala are exploring options to develop smaller and more agile annual surveys that combine household and employment data. Similarly, in 2010, SEDLAC will focus on expanding coverage to provide harmonized data from labor market surveys, which tend to be carried out more frequently than household surveys. Finally, IBRD (with assistance from the Spanish Trust Fund and other donors) is developing the "Listening to LAC" project (L2L).

The aim of this project, which is just unfolding, is to use cell phones for self-administered surveys in order to collect real-time data on life events. By collecting data in real time and skipping data entry steps such as the input of paper surveys into computer databases, L2L is expected to be able to generate data that can inform policymakers on current indicators, thus helping them to respond more quickly and effectively to trends. In addition, this data collection instrument will help policy makers assess the impact of their programs in real time, as well as to observe evolving household coping mechanisms, related to migration, school attendance, employment patterns, and nutrition.