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WORLD BANK

A regular series of notes highlighting recent lessons emerging from the operational and analytical program of the World Bank's Latin America and Caribbean Region.

Improving Policy-making and Development Effectiveness through Statistics

The Regional Award for Innovation in Statistics

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Efforts to design effective development policies aimed at enhancing the welfare of people in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region depend on the improved measurement of living conditions, strengthened information baselines in monitoring and evaluation systems and the availability of high quality statistical information. The World Bank's Team for Statistical Development (TSD)¹ in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) Region is working to increase the capacity of users and producers of statistics to support improved evidence-based policies through the use of high-quality statistics in their design, implementation and evaluation. TSD supports activities that emphasize innovative solutions and best statistical practices in the region.

As part of this approach, and with the financial support of the British Department for International Development (DFID), a Regional Award for Innovation in Statistics was launched in July 2007. The Award aimed to recognize the importance of statistics in development and promote innovation in this area and was the first of its kind, not only in the LAC Region, but worldwide.

Statistics to Improve Policy-making

The level of statistical development in LAC varies considerably between countries, but in general there is an increased awareness of the need for the adequate production and use of high quality statistical information. The growing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) agenda within the LAC region has undoubtedly contributed. Yet

¹ TSD is part of the Poverty and Gender Unit in the Latin America and Caribbean Region (LCR).

statistical development is often under-valued, both in terms of political priorities and financial investments.

The work of TSD has contributed significantly to moving the statistical agenda forward, notably through the increased inclusion of actors engaged in the production and use of statistical information at the national and international levels. The activities build upon the partnership established with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and UN-ECLAC through the MECOVI program. This supported the generation of quality information through improved household surveys carried out by the National Statistical Offices. Recently, TSD has expanded the reach of statistical capacity building to include planning and finance ministries, central banks, line ministries, sub-national governments, the private sector, academia, as well as the collaboration with PARIS21, OECD, European and American national statistical offices around the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). The NSDS requires moving beyond household surveys to also support improvement of censuses and administrative records. This work also required a stock-taking of innovative statistical practices in the LAC region.



A Unique Award is Launched

With financial support from DFID, the Team for Statistical Development launched the Regional Award for Innovation in Statistics in June 2007. .

The competition was enthusiastically welcomed in the region, and resulted in more than 150 applications from 20 countries. For a statistical program to be considered for the Award, it had to be of high overall quality as well as clearly innovative in at least one particular process related to data production, use and/or institutional aspects. Statistical programs in the three categories of censuses, surveys and administrative records, implemented between January 1996 and December 2006 by statistics-producing entities from World Bank member countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region were eligible to submit application(s).

The countries that presented the largest number of applications were Colombia, Argentina and Peru, followed by Panama, Honduras and Uruguay. National Statistical Offices presented a large percentage of the applications (31%), but other participating institutions included sub-national governmental offices (19%), line ministries (15%), NGOs (12%), universities (10%), central banks (7%), and the private sector (5%).

Of the applications received, 17% fell under the category of Censuses; 50% were in the category of Surveys; and, 33% in Administrative Records. The applications also demonstrated a high level of thematic diversity, with the majority of the proposals focusing on social statistics (52%) and economic statistics (27%).

The Award has not only generated a significant level of interest and active involvement of statistical producers in the region, but has also highlighted the creativity of producers to develop and apply new ideas to better address the particular realities of their local contexts. It has further served as a unique opportunity to underscore the importance of statistical development as a foundation for evidence-based policymaking for poverty reduction and equalizing opportunities.

THE EVALUATION PROCESS

For the initial application, the statistical programs were asked to describe the innovation achieved, the quality of the data and make explicit reference to how the innovation and quality of the data contribute to its utility and use. All applications received were evaluated by a group of experts from the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Based on the points system established, approximately 20 percent of programs moved on to the second round, and the institutions responsible for these activities were requested to prepare a more extensive technical brief.

The Concept of Innovation

Innovation implies the application of new ideas to improve a service, product or process. Innovation involves change, but not all changes involve new ideas or significant improvements.

In the framework of the Regional Award for Innovation in Statistics, innovation is linked to new or improved processes of design, data collection, analysis and dissemination of data; the introduction of new technology; modified or new management structures and systems; and the strategic direction of the statistical program: in other words, all the elements that lead to improvements in the quality of statistical information and its use for the design and implementation of better public policies.

The 36 selected semi-finalists representing 13 countries exemplified the thematic diversity found in the region, focusing on social, economic, and infrastructure statistics. In the Census category, eight statistical programs were pre-selected, representing South America, Central America and the Caribbean. The category that received the highest number of applications was the Surveys category, where 18 programs moved on to the next round, representing national statistical offices, ministries, NGOs and universities. Finally, in the category for Administrative Records, 10 statistical activities were selected to remain in the contest.

The information required for the technical brief of the semi-finalists allowed for the use of internationally recognized methods and standards to assess the programs, and focussed on three dimensions:

- **Data Quality:** Integrity, methodological soundness, accuracy and reliability, innovative aspects of data production.
- **Data Use and Utility:** Relevance, serviceability, accessibility, innovative usage for policy and project design, monitoring and evaluation.
- **Institutional Capacity:** Legal and institutional environment, resources, quality of management, innovation for cost-effectiveness.

The Expert Technical Evaluation Committee that evaluated the technical briefs to select the most innovative programs represented the Inter American Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Pan American Health Organization, EUROSTAT, the U.S. Census Bureau, the Spanish National Statistical Office, and the World Bank.

The Winners

On Thursday April 10, 2008, the World Bank announced the winners of the first Regional Award for Innovation in Statistics (see Box 1) in an Award Ceremony with more than 100 people in attendance, including statistical producers representing the 31 finalist statistical programs and representatives of diplomatic delegations, evaluating organizations (IDB, IMF, U.S. Census Bureau, PARIS21, etc.) and press.

“This competition has accentuated the inventive ways in which Latin American countries are pursuing new ideas to better meet the pressing demands for timely, accurate and accessible information,” said Pamela Cox, World Bank Vice President for Latin America and the Caribbean during the Ceremony.

First prize was awarded to the Mexican Family Life Survey, produced by the Iberoamerican University and the Center for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE), in association with other institutions in Mexico. This multi-purpose survey allows for longitudinal nationwide research on many social issues and also includes information on Mexican migrants to the United States.

The second place award went to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) produced by the Colombian National Administrative Department for Statistics (DANE) for its incorporation of features that have improved its use and reliability, such as an innovative management quality certification system used in the production of the index. The Brazilian Ministry of Education won third place for its innovative system that has facilitated the dissemination, evaluation and statistical analysis of higher

education, improving the evaluation of institutions and promoting the excellence of higher education in Brazil. Box 1 provides a short description of each one of the awarded programs.

The jury also awarded honorable mention to seven programs that showed an outstanding level of innovation. The winners and finalists will have the opportunity to further disseminate their experiences at the regional and international levels to promote the exchange of innovative solutions and South-South learning. As Marcelo Giugale, Director of the Bank’s Poverty Reduction and Economic Management (PREM) Department in LAC, said at the Award Ceremony: “Given the high quality and large volume of applications received, the World Bank is setting up a permanent platform that will allow us to further disseminate and cross-fertilize these programs not only within Latin America, but worldwide.”

Widespread Support and Recognition for the Award

The launch and promotion of the Award has served as a means to attract attention to a subject generally seen as dull and generated a high level of interest among numerous stakeholders in the region. The interest shown by statistical producers created notable support and collaboration within the international community, including substantial financial support for the Award from DFID and the Accelerated Data Program (ADP) of

PARIS21. International and bilateral organizations, as well as European and American statistical offices have offered their technical expertise to the process and stimulated greater interest, legitimacy and collaboration to the Award. Furthermore, other regions and units in the Bank already have expressed their interest in replicating the award to promote statistical development.

In an interesting twist, the Regional Award for Innovation in Statistics was recognized with a prize at the LAC Innovation Fair. The award, which is voted on by the staff from the region and across the Bank who attended the fair, was singled out for its creative approach to highlighting the value of this often unacknowledged subject.



Graciela Teruel from Universidad Iberoamericana receives the Award from Pamela Cox, World Bank Regional Vice President

More information on the Regional Award for Innovation in Statistics, including a full list of and additional information on each one of the award-winning programs can be found on the website: www.worldbank.org/lacstatistics and www.bancomundial.org/lacestadisticas

Box 1 - Awarded Programs

PROGRAM	INSTITUTION	COUNTRY	DESCRIPTION
<i>FIRST PLACE</i>			
Mexican Family Life Survey	Universidad Iberoamericana, Center for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE) and associated institutions	Mexico	This survey, conducted at the national, regional and urban-rural levels, compiles information about the well-being of Mexicans. It includes detailed data on income, savings and consumption patterns, nutrition and health. Two of the most innovative aspects of the survey are the inclusion of information on Mexican migrants to the United States, which constitutes an enormous leap forward in the gathering of information on migration and its effect on the rest of the household; and the multi-purpose nature of the survey, which has allowed for longitudinal nationwide research on many social issues, such as mental health, violence and crime.
<i>SECOND PLACE</i>			
Consumer Price Index (CPI)	National Administrative Department for Statistics (DANE)	Colombia	The CPI is a long-standing and highly utilized source of information in the country, incorporating various inventive features that have increased its use and reliability. An innovative and comprehensive management quality certification system has been incorporated into the production of the index based on the review of international norms by independent experts. The consumption basket is calculated using both flexible and fixed variables. The use of mobile devices for the collection of data has further facilitated the compilation and dissemination of information.
<i>THIRD PLACE</i>			
Bank of Evaluators of the National System of Higher Education (BASIs)	National Institute of Studies and Research (INEP), Ministry of Education	Brazil	This program has made it easier to evaluate the quality of higher education in Brazil by integrating the collection and updating of data on professors, evaluators and courses, and linking it to other relevant agencies. The system has facilitated the dissemination, evaluation and statistical analysis of higher education, improving the evaluation of institutions and promoting the excellence of higher education in Brazil
<i>HONORABLE MENTIONS</i>			
<i>Country</i>	<i>Program</i>	<i>Institution</i>	
Argentina	Employment and Business Dynamics Observatory	Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security	
Brazil	Integrated Educational Information System (SIEd)	National Institute of Studies and Research (INEP), Ministry of Education	
Mexico	Labor Statistics	Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS)	
Peru	Demographic and Health Survey -Continuous DHS	National Statistical Office (INEI)	
Peru	Children of the Millennium/ Young Lives	Group for the Analysis of Development (GRADE)	
Trinidad and Tobago	Geographic Data Management System (GDMS)	Central Statistical Office	
Uruguay	Primary Education Monitor	National Administration of Public Education (ANEP)	

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