



No. 1

Objective and Background

Third workshop on Information Society Measurement in Latin America and the Caribbean

Observatorio para la Sociedad de la información
en Latinoamérica y el Caribe[♦]



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[♦] OSILAC es un esfuerzo conjunto entre la Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe de las Naciones Unidas (CEPAL), el Instituto para la Conectividad en las Américas (ICA) del Centro Internacional de Investigación para el Desarrollo, de Canadá (CIID-IDRC) y el proyecto @LIS de la Comisión Europea. Las opiniones expresadas en este documento, que no han sido sometidas a revisión editorial, son de exclusiva responsabilidad de los autores y no pueden entenderse que reflejen la posición oficial de la Unión Europea o el Centro Internacional de Investigaciones para el Desarrollo (CIID).

Third Regional Workshop on Information Society Measurement in Latin America and the Caribbean

Panama city, November 22-24, 2005

Objective

The purpose of the Workshop on Measuring the Information Society is to follow up the process of including and harmonizing Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) statistics in the countries of the region. As well as to formulate recommendations to the Executive Committee of the ECLAC's Statistical Conference of the Americas (SCA)¹, in order to advance in the development of this statistics.

This Third Workshop will review the advancements in the integration of the list of core indicators on ICT, proposed by the countries of the region at the first workshop (Santiago, 3-4 November 2004) and agreed globally at the Thematic Meeting on Measuring the Information Society (Geneva, 7-9 February 2005), as part of the process of the World Summit on the Information Society.

During the workshop, the different focuses and surveys in which countries have integrated agreed ICT statistics on households and business will be addressed. Data collection in other sectors (e.g. government, education) relevant for measuring Information Society, will also be addressed. At the moment, OSILAC, together with the Working Group on ICT measurement of the ECLAC's SCA, is preparing a Compendium of Practices, describing the way in which countries of the region are integrating the ICT matter in their surveys. This Compendium will serve as a basis for countries that have not started yet with this process, as well as to review and optimize existing and current practices.

The idea of this workshop is to share countries' experiences, as well as regional and international best practices, in order to promote representativeness and opportunity of the national collected information and the comparability between the measurements made in the countries of the region. We also look forward to highlighting the importance of measurement in order to show the existing gap in ICT access and usage, its possibilities to improve productivity and the necessity of having statistics to develop public policy.

Specific Objectives

- (1) to highlight the progresses made since the last two workshops,
- (2) to discuss and agree on a Compendium of Practices on the implementation of ICT questions in household and business surveys as well as other sectors,
- (3) to agree on a work plan for the dissemination of results from household and business surveys and to emphasize the integration of ICT indicators in business surveys,

¹ The SCA is the intergovernmental body guiding the regional statistical development

(4) to discuss capacity building and technical assistance requirements, as well as to face the fast growing of ICT, which could be a challenge in order to include some questions in the surveys.

(5) to plan the future activities of the group, especially to support the monitoring of policies

Background

Last years, technological advancements have transformed the ICT usage, broadening it in the productive field as well as in the households or the public administration field, among others. Wide diffusion of new technologies and their impact on global productivity of factors is, obviously, an opportunity to developing countries in general, and the region in particular. At the same time, to avoid increasing the digital divide with more advanced countries, or among reach and poor households (domestic digital divide), is a new challenge for governments in this countries. Various initiatives have been set up in response to the need for data and indicators on the status of the information society in countries throughout the world. One of these is the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).² The Plan of Action adopted at the first phase of this summit serves as a basis for work to establish the status of the information society in each country. The Plan contains suggestions relating to the development of indicators on the strength of which it will be possible to evaluate the status of the information and communication technologies (ICTs) and, in turn, to benchmark the implementation of this Plan to monitor global progress in the use of ICTs.³

Within the framework of this global initiative, the countries of the region held the Regional Preparatory Ministerial Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean for the Second Phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in Rio de Janeiro from 8 to 10 June 2005. At that conference, the countries adopted the eLAC Plan of Action, which in goal 26.3 called on participants to “carry out annual technical seminars, with the participation of national and regional statistical offices, such as those of the Observatory for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (OSILAC).” Also, the Statistical Conference of the Americas, in its third meeting in June 2005 , decided the creation of a working group on Information and Communication Technologies. OSILAC works together with this group and has jointly proposed the elaboration of the "Compendium of Practices on the implementation of ICT questions in households and businesses surveys in Latin America and the Caribbean, with inputs from other sectors".

² The United Nations General Assembly endorsed the holding of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in two phases. The first phase took place in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003 and the second phase took place in Tunis, from 15 to 18 November 2005. The events of the World Summit, which bring together heads of State and Government and other high-profile world leaders, seek, in the long term to place at the top of the global agenda issues such as poverty, environmental degradation and, in this case, the development of an information society. www.itu.int/wsis

³ Plan of Action of the World Summit on the Information Society, 12 December 2003: E). Follow-up and evaluation 28. A realistic international performance evaluation and benchmarking (both qualitative and quantitative), through comparable statistical indicators and research results, should be developed to follow up the implementation of the objectives, goals and targets in the Plan of Action, taking into account different national circumstances. f) All countries and regions should develop tools so as to provide statistical information on the Information Society, with basic indicators and analysis of its key dimensions. Priority should be given to setting up coherent and internationally comparable indicator systems, taking into account different levels of development.”

Another initiative in which the region of Latin America and the Caribbean is participating through the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and OSILAC, is the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development. This partnership is formed by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), the United Nations regional commissions: the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Statistical Office of the European Community (Eurostat), the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force (ICT Task Force) and the World Bank. This group works to define and collect a common set of ICT indicators and to assist the developing countries in their efforts to produce statistics on the information society, thereby helping to close the digital divide that exists between developed and developing countries.⁴

As part of these initiatives, ECLAC prepared a questionnaire with meta-data on ICT statistics in 2003-2004. This was done through the Observatory for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (OSILAC)⁵ and in cooperation with other members of the mentioned Partnership. The questionnaire, which was drawn up jointly and transparently by the different participants, was then circulated to all the national statistical institutes in developing countries. ECLAC circulated the questionnaire in the Latin American and Caribbean countries, ECA, in the African countries, ESCWA, in the countries of Western Asia, ESCAP, in the Asia-Pacific region, UNCTAD, in the European countries which are not members of OECD, while OECD carried out a similar exercise in its member countries. The results of this exercise and compiled in the document "*Measuring ICT: the global status of ICT indicators*"⁶.

Once the exercise involving the questionnaire was completed, a series of five regional workshops was launched by the United Nations commissions in their respective regions. One of these was the Workshop on Measuring the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean, held by OSILAC at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago, Chile, on 3 and 4 November 2004. This workshop was attended by 17 representatives of national statistical institutes in the region and other entities with an interest in the issue. During the workshop, the survey results were presented and a set of indicators was proposed for measuring access to and use of ICTs. (See document Conclusiones Taller LAC 2004.pdf in the Collaborative Space of OSILAC)

Based on the proposals put forward at the regional workshops, the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development consolidated a set of core indicators, which was presented at the Thematic Meeting on Measuring the Information Society, held in Geneva

⁴ <http://measuring-ict.unctad.org>

⁵ OSILAC is a joint effort between the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas (ICA) of the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). From 2005, the @LIS project of the European Commission and the PanAmericas program of IDRC, are also supporting OSILAC.

⁶ <http://www.cepal.org/socinfo/noticias/documentosdetrabajo/1/23121/A5-Partnership%20global%20stocktaking.pdf>

from 7 to 9 February 2005. The proposed questions and definitions may be seen in the document "Core ICT indicators"⁷.

Countries of the region have been integrating this proposal in their existing surveys of household and business and OSILAC is following this process and fostering advancements in their implementation. OSILAC carried out, together with the Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas of the Dominican Republic, a Second workshop on Information Society Measurement for Latin America and the Caribbean the 20th and 21st of October in Santo Domingo. During this workshop, attended by 20 representatives of national statistical offices of the region, the achieved advancements on the implementation of the agreed questions were presented. Discussions about relevant methodological issues to integrate the ICT questions in household and business surveys were also held.

⁷<http://www.cepal.org/socinfo/noticias/documentosdetrabajo/6/23116/Partnership%20core%20%20indicato rs%20English.pdf>