



UNITED NATIONS



Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean

Project briefing seminar: Strengthening
Technical capacity of public finance managers
In select Caribbean SIDS
25 November 2014
Port of Spain, Trinidad

LIMITED

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**REPORT OF PROJECT BRIEFING SEMINAR: STRENGTHENING
TECHNICAL CAPACITY OF PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGERS IN
SELECT CARIBBEAN SIDS**

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. Place and date

1. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) subregional headquarters for the Caribbean convened a briefing seminar for national focal points and consultants involved in the project: *Strengthening the technical capacity of public finance managers in select Caribbean Small island developing states (SIDS)*. The purpose of the Seminar was to provide participants with a brief orientation about the project, as well as discuss expectations and concerns related to the implementation of the first phase of implementation. The meeting was held at the ECLAC office in Port of Spain, Trinidad.

2. Attendance

2. Consultations were held via Webex conferencing technology. Project focal points and national consultants from Barbados, Belize, Jamaica and Antigua and Barbuda participated via Webex. The project focal points from the Latin American and Caribbean Economic and Social Planning Institute (ILPES) and the Fiscal Policy Unit of the Economic Development Division of ECLAC, Santiago also participated remotely. Mr. Vanus James, public finance expert and international consultant for this project joined ECLAC project team in the office of the Subregional headquarters.

B. OUTLINE OF PROCEEDINGS

1. Opening of the meeting

3. Welcome and opening remarks were made by the Project Manager, who also provided participants with a brief overview of the project, including the background and rationale for the areas of focus. He emphasized that this project was conceptualised to respond to the needs and priorities of participating member states and ECLAC would therefore rely heavily on the project focal points to bring their particular countries' issues into focus. Information was also provided on the structure and schedule of the project, as well as the performance indicators.

2. Presentation on Public Expenditure Reviews

4. The international consultant gave a presentation on the preparation of public expenditure reviews (PERs) in Caribbean countries. He discussed the rationale for this process and outlined core as well as country-specific methods. The core methods covered in the presentation included the establishment of a routine for participation, an ICT-based design, domestic ownership and reliance on methods established by the United Nations. He also explained that country-specific methods would be shaped by the objectives of individual governments and the level of coverage adopted.

2. Intervention by project partner ILPES

5. The ILPES focal point for the project briefly highlighted ILPES' role and expertise in building capacity, underscoring the idea that this should be undertaken in conjunction with a demand-driven process and manual development. Her colleague also added that timely and detailed data was very important for the project as well as adherence to international guidelines.

3. Discussion

6. The Project Manager opened up the floor to participants to ask questions, make suggestions or express concerns about the information presented and the project in general. Questions from the national consultants and focal points dealt with the issues and challenges of collecting data and conducting interviews. Regarding the collection of data, including the interviewing of personnel, the Project Manager informed that ECLAC would provide guidance to national consultants in the form of helpful notes and sample questionnaires. He re-emphasized the importance of collaboration between project focal points and the national consultants to identify the most relevant interviewees, both group and individual. Clarification was also sought on whether the training manual to be created based on the studies submitted by the national consultant would aim to formalize programme budgeting techniques in the participating countries. The international consultant responded that the public expenditure review process discussed may be used as an additional tool to any budgeting methodology. He added that it can also be used to monitor and evaluate how budgetary allocations performed and expenditure is delivered. He also stated that since the project will be governed by the priorities identified by each country, decisions regarding the data to be collected and the use of the PERs should be determined by the stakeholders of the project, including the focal points and consultants.

7. The ILPES focal point asked whether the PERs were being conceptualized from the perspective of governments, sectors, agencies or were based on outcomes. She also expressed concern about capacity-building as it relates to these issues. The Project Manager noted that ECLAC would not seek to anticipate or pre-judge the emphasis of the activity, to ensure flexibility in responding to the needs identified by participating member states.

8. The focal point from the Fiscal Policy Unit of ECLAC, Santiago suggested that great care be taken by the national consultants and focal points with the homogenization of fiscal data. The Project Manager indicated that this issue had been built into the Terms of Reference for consultants. He acknowledged however, that in some countries strategies would have to be developed to work around binding constraints in this area.

9. The international consultant asked whether ILPES would be able to provide guidance on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to boost participation in the budgeting process. Lucy responded that there are colleagues at ILPES who worked in the area of e-governance, which would also be useful for this project. She agreed to pass on the relevant contact information to the Project Manager, who would follow up.

4. Closing remarks

10. The Project Manager thanked all meeting participants for their time and willingness to participate in the session. He informed that a brief report of the session would be forwarded to all project focal points and consultants, including those who were not present, so that everyone would be properly informed of the day's proceedings.

Annex I**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

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Annex II**PROGRAMME**

- 0900-0915 1. **Opening**
- Welcome remarks and introduction by Dillon Alleyne, Deputy Director a.i. ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean
- 0915-0930 2. **Overview of project.**
- Dillon Alleyne, Deputy Director a.i., ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean
- 0930-1000 3. **Public Expenditure Reviews (PERs) and Government priorities.**
- International consultant
- 1000-1045 4. **Question and answer session**
- 1045-1100 5. **Presentation by Latin American and Caribbean Economic and Social Planning Institute (ILPES).**
- ILPES representative
- 1100-1115 6. **Closing**
- Mr. Dillon Alleyne, Deputy Director a.i. ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean