



The Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) on Tuesday (January 15) launched its groundbreaking Electronic Data Collection System (eDACS), which promises to revolutionize the way the agency collects and processes data.

Speaking at the launch held at the Knutsford Court Hotel in New Kingston, Director of Information and Technology at STATIN, Howard Hamilton said the new system will utilise portable/mobile devices, such as tablet computers to compile data from surveys.

Under the system, questionnaires for surveys will be loaded to the electronic devices, which will be used by STATIN officers to record data in the field. This information will then be uploaded to the agency's main system for analysis.

Mr. Hamilton noted that the system, which was designed by the STATIN team, with funding support from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), will result in significant savings of both time and money. He noted that the agency is projected to save about 35 to 40 per cent in time and financial resources under the new electronic system.

One of the main areas of savings, he said, will be in the use of paper, which will enable STATIN to become a much greener organisation.

"STATIN has always been a paper-based operation - really paper-based. It greets you in the walkways, in the individual offices, and you see paper (stacked) to the roof. We had to find a way to reduce the amount of paper we used," he said.

Mr. Hamilton informed that apart from reducing the amount of paper used by the agency, eDACS will reduce errors and lessen the input time for data, which will improve the quality of data and information collected. The new system will also enable more timely delivery of final results from surveys.

In terms of external benefits, Mr. Hamilton pointed out that the new system will enable higher quality statistical products; as well as improve the agency's ability to meet international standards, such as the Special Data Dissemination Standard.

eDACS will be implemented in two phases with the first phase to involve compiling data from the Consumer Price Indices (CPI), Producer Price Indices (PPI) and the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Phase II will see the agency utilising the new system for the collection of data under the Survey of Living Conditions, Household Expenditure Survey and the Adhoc Survey.

State Minister for Science, Technology, Energy and Mining, Hon. Julian Robinson lauded the agency for its vision in developing such a timely and significant tool.

"What we have seen launched here this morning is consistent with the government's own vision for the ICT (Information and Communication Technology) sector," he stated.

"I am very delighted that this is a solution that is developed for Jamaicans and by Jamaicans, because one of our explicit goals for the country is to move from being net consumers of technology to becoming net producers of technology," he added.

He further challenged the staff at STATIN to market the product for export throughout the region and elsewhere in an effort to earn valuable foreign exchange for the agency.

"The same challenges that exist in Jamaica exist elsewhere and what we want Jamaicans to do is to develop solutions to problems, which exist here and to use that as a basis for exporting them. That is really the only way we can grow our way out of the challenges we face as a country," he remarked.

In the meantime, Director General, STATIN, Sonia Jackson, said the creation and introduction of the new system, which went live on January 2, forms part of the agency's modernisation efforts.

She noted that eDACS was a significant achievement not only for STATIN, but for Jamaica in general.

“It is homegrown. It is done in Jamaica, by Jamaicans, for Jamaicans,” she stated.

She said that some 150 members of staff were trained over three weeks in its use, which was facilitated by the World Bank’s Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building.

The Statistical Institute of Jamaica is an agency of the Office of the Prime Minister.

The main functions of the Institute are: to collect, compile, analyse, abstract and public statistical information relating to the commercial, industrial, social, economic and general activities and condition of the people; to take any census in Jamaica; and to collaborate with public agencies in the collection, compilation and publication of statistical information including statistical information derived from the activities of such agencies.