



The Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) has launched a brand new data collection system, designed to make their services more efficient and transform the agency into a first-world data collection institute.

The difference between the new system and the original one starts with the new system's name – eDACS - which stands for Electronic Data Collection System. With eDACS, STATIN has essentially switched its operations from being paper dependent to being digitally managed.

“eDACS is pretty much a data collection system. The difference here is that we're planning not to go into the field with paper, but to use portable devices (such as tablet computers),” informs Director of Information Technology at STATIN, Howard Hamilton.

The eDACS has been fully implemented since January 2, and in addition to removing STATIN's high paper dependency, it is expected to generate several other benefits.

“We expect the quality of data to improve, more timely delivery of final results and of course, we expect that the data we get will be more accurate,” Mr. Hamilton tells JIS News.

“Another important thing is that we should now be able to administer more than one surveys at a time,” he adds.

Going digital is also expected to reduce the agency's operational costs by as much as 35 to 40 per cent, and make sharing data between the head office and the regional branches much faster and easier.

Mr. Hamilton also points out that the new system will allow for shorter turn-a-round time in

processing the data received, and will assist the agency in meeting several international standards in the format and timeframe for the delivery of statistics.

“We believe that in using the technology, this will also help us to innovate how we work, and how we carry out our duties,” he says.

In the meantime, STATIN’s Director of Field Services, Merville Anderson, says the interviewers are very pleased to have the digital system at their disposal, as it has made interviews much easier and quicker.

“They have put away the heavy bags and the large questionnaires. The interviewers have found that with the tablets, only the questions that are relevant (are addressed). There is a lot more, but the main things are the quality, the timing, the ability of the supervisor to make the corrections quickly,” she adds.

Mrs. Anderson is encouraging members of the public to co-operate with STATIN’s field officers, as they use eDACS to make the interview process quicker and more efficient.

For her part, Director General at STATIN, Sonia Jackson, says it has been a mission of hers for years to take the agency digital, and as such, she is more than pleased to finally launch the Electronic Data Collection System. She further notes that she is even more pleased at the fact that the product was created locally.

“What is important about eDACS is that it is home grown...it was done by Jamaicans for Jamaicans in Jamaica,” she says.

eDACS has received even more kudos from Minister of State in the Ministry of Science, Technology, Energy and Mining, Julian Robinson, who has lauded the agency for its vision in developing, what he describes as a timely and significant tool.

“What we have seen demonstrated and launched is consistent with the Government’s own vision for the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector. One of our explicit goals as a country is to move from being net consumers of technology to being net producers of technology,” he says.

The State Minister suggests that the agency’s management explore exporting the eDACS system to other countries.

“The same challenges that exist in Jamaica exist elsewhere, so once you have developed this great solution, you need to export this solution and earn foreign exchange for STATIN. I look forward to STATIN becoming a pioneer, whether it is in this region or elsewhere and having this product adapted and exported to countries across the world,” Mr. Robinson says.