

I E S C A R I B E :

A Program for Economic Research on the Caribbean Basin

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IDESCARIBE (Institutes of Economic and Social Research of the Caribbean Basin) is an independent, nonprofit, nonpolitical, and scientific organization. It is engaged in planning and initiating studies useful to the economic development of the Caribbean Basin. The organization stresses applied research with a policy focus.

Founded upon the ideal of regional collaboration, IDESCARIBE is comprised of a group of economic and social research institutions in the Caribbean Basin. It is based on the belief that development and socio-economic progress require integrated research efforts on the part of regional institutions working jointly toward a common goal. This conviction reflects the consensus of a community of member institutes and their confidence that valuable studies will be made on a regional international basis and that the technical efficiency of these institutions will improve as a result of exchanging ideas and experiences.

The primary purpose of IDESCARIBE is to promote contacts and cooperation among the economic and social research institutes of the Caribbean Basin by four means: first, by conducting research and joint studies on topics related to the economic and social development process of the region; second, by organizing conferences and seminars on key problems in the Caribbean Basin to promote academic exchange and public policy discussion; third, by publishing the results of these research efforts; and fourth, by collaborating to provide postgraduate training programs in economics for the basin.

Origin

The idea of organizing a research community in the Caribbean Basin emerged at the Seminar on the Economic Problems of the Caribbean Basin, which was held at Florida International University on 30 April and 1 May 1981. Under the auspices of the Department of Economics and the Latin American and Caribbean Center of Florida International University, directors and representatives from various research institutes in Central America, Colombia, the Dominican Republic,

Mexico, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, the English-speaking Caribbean, and Miami, Florida, proposed that a network for economic and social research in the Caribbean Basin be established.

A second seminar was held on 20 October 1981, under the auspices of the Fondo para el Avance de las Ciencias Sociales of the Dominican Republic and partially funded by the Ford Foundation. An agreement was signed in Santo Domingo for the formation of the network of economic and social research institutes in the Caribbean Basin that would be known as IESCARIBE. In April 1983, IESCARIBE was registered as a nonprofit research foundation under Association Law 520 of the Dominican Republic by a decree signed by the Dominican president.

Structure

The IESCARIBE bylaws outline the basic components of the structure of the organization. The member institutes constitute the highest authority of the IESCARIBE organization, as expressed through the Assembly of Delegates who represent them. The assembly has the power to elect the IESCARIBE Council and to approve the admission of new members. The council is made up of eight members, including a president, a vice-president, and an executive secretary. The Advisory Committee directs and supports IESCARIBE from a technical angle and consolidates its general activities. The Coordinating Committee consists of directors and delegates from the founding private institutions; under the supervision of the IESCARIBE Council, it directs and executes the research and administrative activities of IESCARIBE.

IESCARIBE Seminars are generally held at the same time as the IESCARIBE Assemblies. Participants in the seminars select and discuss research topics, develop methodologies and procedures for them, present and review progress reports, decide on the steps to be followed in specific research and research problems in general. The seminars, which are held at least twice a year, provide the most visible center of IESCARIBE activities. In addition to participants from the member institutes, observers from various organizations and other experts are invited to enrich these discussions. The site for seminars rotates among the cities that are home to participating institutions in the Caribbean Basin. IESCARIBE Seminars are traditionally linked to important conferences on social and economic issues so that the researchers from member institutes may also present papers on panels organized by IESCARIBE.

Activities

As a general rule, the product of IESCARIBE research is presented in the form of *IESCARIBE Research Summaries*. Three have been prepared so far: *Latin American External Debt and Economic Growth; Trade, Debt, and Development in the Caribbean Basin*; and the forthcoming *Debt Crisis and Development Strategies in Latin America*. Another publication, the *Seminar Synthesis*, covers the proceedings, papers, and research reports presented at each seminar.

Joint research projects under way at present in IESCARIBE deal with three major areas: trade in the Caribbean Basin, migration of the labor force in the region, and industrial policies and employment in the region. The study on trade in the Caribbean Basin encompasses a detailed examination of the composition of exports and imports of agro-industrial goods among the Caribbean Basin countries. The project's goals are twofold. It seeks first to analyze the characteristics of exports in order to understand better the possibilities for increasing exports in the member countries of the basin, particularly to determine potential demand for exports in the relatively more developed countries (Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela). The second goal is to determine the impact on exportation of customs policies, fiscal subsidies, preferential rates of exchange, and export incentives in order to determine both the institutional and the physical restraints on trade within the basin.

The project on migration of the labor force in the Caribbean Basin seeks to analyze the economic factors determining international migration within the Caribbean Basin and includes a review of existing research on the impact of foreign investment on the basin's emigration patterns. The project has three areas of emphasis: first, the economic impact of migration on the sending and receiving countries; second, the causes (push-pull) of migration, including the possible role played by foreign investors and Caribbean economic growth policies; and third, the economic and social impact of return migration and remittances.

A new research effort on industrial policies and employment in the Caribbean Basin encompasses an evaluation of industrial development in these countries. Industrial policy for the second half of the eighties will be examined within the context of an economywide approach, focusing particularly on the generation of employment.

Financial Backing

In accordance with the cooperative and decentralized mode of IESCARIBE, financing is provided for its institutional development, as well as for its specific projects. These activities are financed by interna-

tional and national, public and private sources to a certain degree; however, IESCARIBE is financed mostly by the member institutions and by resources provided by institutions participating in its public policy conferences.

In addition to institute financing, IESCARIBE has obtained small grants for its seminars and for project preparation and related meetings from the U.S. Agency for International Development, the German Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Econometric Society, and the U.S. Department of Education. IESCARIBE maintains its independence and strength, however, by drawing principally on the resources of its member institutes and national governments. Unencumbered by burdensome central coordination, IESCARIBE can utilize its resources effectively. As a result, IESCARIBE centers have been established with government support in the major countries covered by the IESCARIBE network.

Prospects

IESCARIBE's basic thrust is applied economic and social research for the purpose of strengthening the public policy process in the Caribbean Basin. An increasing number of autonomous bodies and public institutions are expected to join. Eventually, according to the decentralized structure of IESCARIBE that shares the responsibilities of coordination geographically, more IESCARIBE centers are expected to emerge in the principal countries of the Caribbean Basin. Thus IESCARIBE will be able to contribute to the economic policy debate at the national level and strengthen its ties with the various member countries.

APPENDIX 1: IESCARIBE COUNCIL

José Antonio Ocampo, Executive Director
Fundación para la Educación Superior y el Desarrollo
(FEDESARROLLO)
Bogotá, Colombia

Luis A. Canela Bueno, Director
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Santo Domingo, República Dominicana

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Ciudad México, México

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San José, Costa Rica

Juan Manuel Villasuso
Minister of Economics and Planning
San José, Costa Rica

APPENDIX 2: MEMBER INSTITUTIONS OF IESCARIBE

Caribbean Common Market
Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER)
University of the West Indies
Kingston, Jamaica
and
University of Trinidad
Port of Spain, Trinidad

Central America
Secretaría Permanente del Tratado General de Integración
Económica Centroamericana (SIECA)
Ciudad Guatemala, Guatemala

Colombia
Banco de la República
Bogotá

Fundación para la Educación Superior y el Desarrollo
(FEDESARROLLO)
Bogotá

Costa Rica

Instituto de Investigaciones en Ciencias Económicas
Universidad de Costa Rica
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Dominican Republic

Banco Central de la República Dominicana
Santo Domingo

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Honduras

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Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras
Tegucigalpa

Mexico

Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE)
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Panama

Consejo Nacional de Inversiones
Ciudad Panamá

United States

Department of Economics
Florida International University
Miami

Latin American and Caribbean Center
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