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REGIONAL CO-OPERATION  
IN THE DEMOGRAPHIC FIELD  
(Note by the Secretariat)

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REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE DEMOGRAPHIC FIELD

1. The population censuses which are being taken in most countries of Africa in connexion with the 1960 World Census Programme are furnishing a large body of information on the numbers, distribution and characteristics of the African populations. These data will provide new and firmer bases for the preparation of national plans for social and economic development throughout the region. In the coming years the attention of governments will of necessity be focussed on the collection of data needed to supplement the census data now being secured as well as on the analysis and utilization of these data in such a manner as to help in the formulation of national development policies. The need for regional programmes to supplement and support the activities of governments in their efforts to collect, analyse and utilize demographic information has been recognized by the Commission as a part of its programme of work. This programme is also closely linked to the conclusions and recommendations of two UN Commission, i.e. population and statistical commissions. It is proposed in this note to cover some of the areas where such cooperation has been attempted since the last conference of African Statisticians and to spell out some of the plans that are now being considered for the furtherance of regional cooperation in the field of demography.

Progress of work at the regional level

2. Since the initiation of demographic work at the Commission, the major emphasis of the regional programme has been directed to the problem of building up demographic data in line with the recommendations made by the First Conference of African Statisticians in connexion with the Statistical Survey of Africa. Though shortage of staff in the Secretariat has to some extent limited the work that could be done on this, it has been possible to undertake the following types of activities in this

connexion:

(i) Consultations have been held with various governments concerning problems relating to the development of census and demographic surveys in line with the 1960 World Population Census Programme. Such consultations have been held with the Statistical Departments of the United Arab Republic, Nigeria, Ghana, Togo and Kenya. At the present time negotiations are underway for providing consultative advice to the Municipality of Addis Ababa in connexion with a census of the city planned for 1961. Similar help is already being given to the University College of Addis Ababa in the analysis and processing of a Social Structure Survey carried out by it in 1960. Such consultative advice and short-term assistance in the area of data collection is expected to be pursued in at least half a dozen countries of the region which plan to undertake a census or sample survey during this year and early 1962.

(ii) In addition to consultative advice provided regarding censuses, the Commission has carried out two projects in West Africa, in close cooperation with the Government of Ghana, in order to make possible the exchange of information and experience in the collection of demographic data. The first project, which was intended essentially as a programme for exchange of experience, was attended by Senior Statisticians of most of the West African Countries who studied the 1960 Population Census of Ghana and the Post-Enumeration Survey in a Study Tour of three weeks duration. The second project, was an intensive 3-month training course in population census techniques for middle grade officials from those English speaking countries of West Africa that were planning to undertake census operations early in 1962. A detailed report of these two projects is given as a separate document (E/CN.14/Stat/L.14).

(iii) In the field of evaluation of population data, the Secretariat is at present engaged in preparing a Statistical Handbook on Population which will try to present an over-all coverage of existing demographic

information for the countries of the region, make an estimate of the reliability and accuracy of such information and give, wherever possible, estimates of demographic ratios and indices on a sub-regional basis. It is also planned to present in this publication a picture of the existing gaps in demographic data.

(iv) In the analytical field the Commission has cooperated in a number of projects initiated by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The Commission has carried out in cooperation with the Government of the United Arab Republic a case study of the evaluation of the 1960 Population Census results. It must be pointed out that the finalization of this report has been unduly delayed due to pressure of the operational programmes carried out by the Commission but it is expected that the document will be presented to the Government of the United Arab Republic for comment during May 1961 so that the report can be published during June or July 1961.

#### Trends of National programmes for future years

3. The work in the improvement of demographic statistics in the African region covers a number of distinct but inter-related areas. Most African countries have taken measures in the past decade to obtain a clearer idea of their total populations and of the geographical distribution of such populations. In addition quite a number have information of the distribution of population by some of the major economic and social characteristics which need to be filled in order to provide a useful basis for planning at national and regional levels. The gaps in demographic information become particularly significant in relation to those data helpful for developing estimates of population growth at national or sectoral levels. Except for a very limited number of countries, most of them located in North Africa, little data on fertility, mortality and rate of population growth are available, and birth and death registration on even a modest scale does not exist at the present time.

4. Thus in the development of a programme for improvement of demographic statistics in the region the following areas of work become important:

(i) The development of a programme of collection and processing of data to cover those aspects of demographic statistics that are not at present covered by existing data. In the long run, the need for developing a vital registration system has been recognized by many governments of the region and should perhaps demand priority in those countries where census or sample surveys have already given a first understanding of the structural situation.

(ii) Measures for ensuring that the demographic data collected at the recent censuses are fully and intensively processed and analyzed so that the maximum benefit of the operation can be available to users of demographic data, particularly in the development field.

(iii) The preparation of analytical studies of census and related socio-economic data to aid in policy formulation and national planning. This area of study is particularly important when we consider that most of the census information available for the region in the past have been presented in the form of raw data and the analytical use made of such data has been limited.

#### Suggestions and plans for regional activities

5. The integrated development of a programme to cover each of the areas mentioned above must of necessity be attempted and carried out at the national level. However, it is possible that, at this stage when the technical and manpower resources of most African countries are insufficient, international bodies be of help not only in drawing up the priorities of such a programme but also in its systematic development. The efforts of the United Nations may therefore be needed in providing for regional or group country projects that will help to train technical manpower to meet the

varying needs of such countries, promote exchange of experience and, where requested, provide technical assistance of a relatively short term nature to develop analytical studies of the data collected. It is expected that the resources available to the Secretariat to support such a programme will be considerably enhanced from mid-1961 and a contribution toward each of the activities mentioned in para 4 above can then be made more easily than at present.

6. The main activities in which the Commission could contribute in the coming year will be in the field of collection of demographic data and in the evaluation and utilization of census results as a basic aid to national planning. A number of programmes are now under way or being initiated by the Commission and UN Headquarters to provide assistance to governments planning action in these areas of demographic activity.

A. Collection and processing of demographic statistics

7. In line with the development of an ECA statistical field service that will provide consultative assistance in various specialized fields, a regional adviser in the field of census and vital statistics, Miss K. Jupp, has been working since April 1961 with the Commission under the Technical Assistance Programme. Her services can be utilized by those countries in the region that are planning to undertake censuses or demographic surveys or that will be engaged in processing census returns during the next two years. In this connexion, it must be mentioned that contacts with various countries of the region indicate a desire on their part to set up national or sample registration systems to remedy the complete lack of information that exists regarding current fertility and mortality levels of the population. The services of this regional adviser can be obtained by a number of government of the region in connexion with the organization and setting up of any programme in this field provided that an official request is sent to the Executive Secretary well in advance. The period of

assignment to the country requesting such assistance, which will depend on the nature of the task, can be arranged by mutual agreement between the Commission and the requesting government. It is felt that such assignments should not exceed 4 to 6 months. For any longer term project assistance could be sought under the country's programmes of United Nations Technical Assistance, provided the project is given sufficient priority by the country. An additional demographic is expected to be available on the staff of the Secretariat early in 1962 and it is hoped that the ability of the Commission to supplement the activities of governments in the field of data collection and analysis will be considerably improved from now on.

B. Regional programme of assistance in demographic studies

8. At the present time the United Nations is considering the initiation of a five-year programme of technical assistance in the field of population studies for the less-developed regions of the world. It is felt that timely assistance in the next few years, as the results of censuses become available, will assist governments in making use of these data for planning and execution of development programmes and for determining suitable national policies. This programme, which is expected to be partially financed by a foundation, envisages the provision of technical assistance for the planning of studies of characteristics and trends of population and their relationships to social and economic factors, for training in the methods of such studies and for development of research institutions to carry out such studies. The work of the Commission's Secretariat in the analytical field will be closely integrated with projects under this Five-Year Programme in the African region. Some of the major projects planned under this five-year scheme of assistance are listed below:

Development of research and training facilities

9. Beginning in 1962, it is proposed to develop a demographic research centre at one of the leading universities in Africa. This centre, which will mainly concentrate on analytical research in the census and related data of the countries of the region, will also provide in-service training for a small number of trainees deputed by the countries. The fellowships given at the centre will be on a one-year basis for those interested in specializing in demography and on a six-month basis for statisticians and economists desiring acquaintance with demographic methods useful for work in their special fields. By means of this centre, it is proposed to associate persons working in the census and statistical fields with research projects, carried out at the centre, oriented to African problems of direct interest to their countries.

The Commission has been negotiating with various governments during the past two months about the possibility of establishing the centre at one of the major cities of the region. It is hoped that final arrangements regarding the establishment of the centre will be completed by the end of this year.

Aid to national institutions

10. In addition to the regional centre mentioned above, it is planned to provide financial and technical aid to national research institutions to develop demographic research programmes in the countries. It is proposed to take up the question of such assistance soon after a decision on the locale of the research centre is decided. In connexion with this aid every effort will be made to assure that possibilities for demographic research work are both extensive and diversified.



Regional and national seminars

11. It is proposed to convene a seminar on population problems in the second quarter of 1962. Details of this seminar are provided in the conference document E/CN.14/Stat/L.20. . This seminar at the regional level is to be followed by a series of six national or group country seminars held in various parts of the region in order to discuss and formulate plans for analysis and evaluation of the recent population census results. These seminars are expected to set the stage for intensive analytical studies in demography.

National studies of census results

12. It is proposed to assign regional experts to countries which would request advice on the execution of studies based on census results, for periods ranging from a few weeks to a year, according to the circumstances of each country. The mode of operation of the United Nations experts assigned under this programme will be more or less along the same lines as that of Regional Advisers in Census and Vital Statistics mentioned above and their programmes of work will be organized on the basis of the specific requests and priorities of governments concerned.