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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

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Since the report on technical assistance to the third Conference^{1/} the programmes of technical cooperation of the United Nations and its specialized agencies in statistics have grown. This expansion consisted of providing an increased number of advisers and operational and executive (OPEX) personnel; and a greater number of fellowships for study at UN-sponsored and/or assisted training centres. In addition, grants continued for individual fellowships for advanced study abroad and for UN-sponsored seminars, working groups and study tours.

A recent development in strengthening programmes of assistance to countries has been the use of volunteer personnel provided under the Associate Expert scheme. This scheme, arising out of ECOSOC Resolution 849 (XXXII), takes advantage of the offer of certain "donor" countries to provide the services of junior professional staff to serve on UN projects. Junior personnel provided under this scheme are normally assigned to work with senior UN advisers, and their services have proved valuable in alleviating the shortage of qualified counterpart staff in a number of countries.

Since the end of 1963, the number of requests from countries of the region for OPEX personnel has increased. As a result, a Chief Statistician has been working in Nigeria since October 1963; in February 1965 a Deputy Director of Statistics was assigned to Ethiopia; and in May 1965 a Director of Statistics was provided to Somalia. In the case of Nigeria the Chief Statistician, in addition to his other duties, is helping in the development of an integrated system of statistics in close cooperation with five experts in such fields as economic statistics, demographic statistics, data processing and training. The services of these five experts are provided under the Expanded Programme. Requests for OPEX personnel have also been received from Bechuanaland, Tanzania and Zambia, but efforts are still being made to fill these vacancies.

^{1/} Document E/CN.14/CAS.3/7.

In addition to advice on statistical organization and the development of statistical systems, expert services in the period 1964-1965 cover such topics as demographic and industrial statistics, national accounts, sample design and enquiries, and statistical training, as well as agricultural, labour health and education statistics. Technical assistance in the four latter subjects is provided by the specialized agencies of United Nations.

Arrangements also continued for the provision of regional advisers. These advisers are attached to the Economic Commission for Africa, and their primary function is to visit the countries in the region, on request, to advise on technical problems. In addition to the regional advisers in demographic statistics, national accounts, public finance statistics and sampling provided by United Nations, regional advisers on agricultural statistics are provided by FAO.

The magnitude of the programme and the kind of advisory assistance being rendered to countries in the region may be noted from the table of experts in post as at 30 June 1965, shown in the Annex to this document,

A significant part of technical assistance funds have also been utilized for region-wide activities in order to promote the programmes of statistical development in the region recommended by the Conference and the Statistical Commission.

Statistical training continues to have the highest priority in technical assistance programmes in the region, in accordance with the wishes expressed at the various sessions of this Conference, and the Economic Commission for Africa assumes major responsibility for co-ordinating these training projects. As a full report on facilities and requirements in the region is given in a separate report to this Conference (document E/CN.14/CAS.4/9) details on these activities are not given here. It might be mentioned, however, that the three middle-level centres jointly sponsored by the United Nations and the Governments of Cameroun, Ethiopia and Ghana have completed their fourth year of operations and students have now been selected for the 1965-66 course beginning in October.

In line with the recommendations of the Conference at its third session for the further expansion of existing facilities and provision of new ones, the Yaounde centre has planned a small "adjoint technique" course in addition to the existing course at "agent" level. In addition, availability of technical assistance funds has made possible the establishment in 1965 of a new middle-level training centre in Dar-es-Salaam for students from East Africa. The nationally sponsored middle-level training centre in Abidjan continued to receive UN support in the form of fellowships, and training officers continued to be provided to countries wishing to expand their in-service and university training programmes (Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria, Somalia, Sierra Leone and Algeria).

In the past, fellowships were made available to candidates from Libya, Morocco and Sudan to pursue a two-year diploma course in statistics at the Statistical Institute in Cairo, and similar fellowships will be made available in future for study at this as well as at the Statistical Institute in Accra.

The Conference will also be interested to learn that the Governing Council of the Special Fund approved at its June 1965 meeting the request of the Government of Morocco to transform the "Centre de formation d'ingénieurs des travaux statistiques de Rabat" into an expanded "Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics." Whereas the "Centre" has until now been offering a two-year "attaché" course, two types of courses will be offered at the "Institute": a more advanced three-year programme which will cover both statistics and applied economics, and a one-year technician course, which will aim at preparing trainees to perform accurately and with understanding the routine and semi-routine tasks which are part of statistical work.

A major concern of the countries in Africa is the development of statistical programmes for planning purposes. In view of this, a study tour dealing with statistics in relation to planning, financed under the technical assistance programme, was organized for the third quarter of 1964 by the Secretariats of ECA and ECE, in collaboration with the Governments of France, Ghana, Tunisia, UAR and the USSR. The tour lasted

from 20 August until 2 October 1964. The purpose of the study tour was to provide an opportunity for members of statistical and planning organizations to examine the way in which statistical services have been developed to meet planning requirements in the countries visited. Eleven African statisticians from Cameroon, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Zambia, Senegal, Tunisia, Uganda and UAR participated in the full tour. They were joined by four participants from Greece, Poland, Rumania and Yugoslavia.

Regional consultations on various subjects have also been made possible through funds provided in the programmes of technical cooperation. A meeting of North and East African Statisticians met in Addis Ababa from 8-14 April 1965, and a meeting of heads of statistical offices of West Africa took place in Niamey from 19-23 October 1964. These meetings provided the opportunity to exchange experience with respect to the common problems of these countries in developing their statistical systems and organizations. A meeting of directors of the middle-level training centres in Lagos, Abidjan, Yaoundé, Achimota and Addis Ababa, which met in Addis Ababa from 16-20 April 1965, made possible an exchange of views on the programmes of the centres as well as on arrangements for their future operation.

The emphasis on work in national accounts led to the organization of two Working Groups. The first, on problems of national accounts in Africa, met in Addis Ababa from 9-16 December 1964, and reviewed the results of trials by various African countries to present their available economic data in the format prescribed by the Intermediate System of National Accounts. The second Working Group, meeting in Addis Ababa from 14-21 July 1965, was one of a series of similar working groups scheduled to meet in the various regions of the world during 1965 and 1966 in order to discuss the proposed revised UN System of National Accounts and its adaptation to the circumstances of the developing countries. The second meeting developed an adaptation which incorporated the results of the experimentation with the Intermediate System of National Accounts and which would provide the data required for planning and promoting economic and social development.

In the field of demographic and social statistics, two meetings were financed from technical assistance funds. The first African Seminar on Vital Statistics was held in Addis Ababa from 14-19 December 1964. The aims of the Seminar were (a) to study the methods, techniques and problems of providing immediate measures of the principal vital rates in Africa, including retrospective inquiries or other means as substitutes for a fully-functioning system of civil registration and (b) to discuss methods, devices and procedures of establishing, extending and improving civil registration of vital events in the region. Finally, a Working Group on Censuses of Population and Housing met in Addis Ababa from 21-29 June 1965. This meeting represented the initial stage of the formulation of a regional programme for African participation in the 1970 World Census Programme, which would provide for the collection of the basic data on population and housing needed for economic and social planning. The Group agreed on a provisional list of topics for inclusion in a population census.

