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INTRODUCTION TO THE
GUIDE SYLLABUS FOR IN-SERVICE STATISTICAL TRAINING

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Objectives

1. The "Guide Syllabus for in-service Statistical Training" was prepared at the request of African national statistical services which had asked for guidance on the organization and content of in-service training for middle-level statistical personnel in their offices. Such personnel have usually had only general education up to 12th grade or 'O' level or equivalent standard. They may be new recruits into the statistical office who may have just completed their secondary education or persons who have worked for a long period without any sustained refresher courses. Due to the diversity of standards in the region, both the level of attainment and their aptitude for statistical education may differ widely. A general guide syllabus for all the region is therefore only useful if it will be adapted to suit the needs of individual countries.
2. In this connexion, it may be recalled that the main objective of in-service training is to improve the work performance of serving middle-level personnel. However, it has been found that if this objective is not linked to career development with well-defined promotion outlets, most in-service training schemes fail to achieve their primary objective due to the general apathy of the trainees. There is at least one case on record where a training course had to be abandoned because the staff affected required prior guarantees of promotion prospects which the management of the national statistical office was either unwilling or unable to provide. It should be mentioned that in a number of African countries, especially those of French expression, salaries are closely linked to qualifications. Unless in-service training is closely linked to qualifications there is at present no chance that a person completing such training and improving his work performance to the advantage of his organization will be rewarded by means of higher remuneration.
3. The preceding discussion is necessary to explain the logic behind the development of the guide syllabus. It is intended to give adequate training to serving middle-level statistical personnel not only to enable them to improve their work performance but also to ensure that at the end of the second stage of the course they will be accepted as having completed the equivalent of the certificate course.

Development of Guide Syllabus

4. In order for the Guide Syllabus to reflect the needs and practices of national statistical offices, information was sought from each national statistical office on details of in-service training offered and the course content of such training. Only a small fraction of national statistical offices replied that they run such courses and provided details of their syllabus. One office provided ECA with copies of printed lecture notes.
5. This information was supplemented by staff of the Statistics and Population Divisions of ECA in respect of areas within their field of competence. In the first draft Guide Syllabus, an attempt was made to relate the scope of the syllabus to its objectives. The draft was circulated to all national statistical offices. UN statistical experts attached to countries, the Statistical Office of the UN and the statistics divisions of the relevant specialized agencies and bilateral organizations, the Institute of Statisticians and the chairman of the Task Force on Tertiary and Technical Education in Statistics of the International Statistical Institute.

6. Many comments were received in connexion with the draft syllabus. Some of these related to the orientation of the Guide Syllabus, a few to the time allocation of the individual subjects within the syllabus while others dealt with specific technical details. The ECA Statistics Division is grateful for all the comments received which represented the greatest detailed response to any of its draft documents issued in recent years.

7. A few of the comments related to the inclusion of mathematics and English in the syllabus for Stages I and II. It was considered that if the candidates already possess 'O' level passes in English and mathematics, then the foundation needed for the course has already been laid and additional courses in the two subjects were not required. In any case, some considered that the mathematics course included work which might cause serious problems for most of the sub-professional staff undertaking the training. It was suggested for example that too much time should not be spent on vector algebra and vector geometry and that in fact the two topics could be eliminated completely since not much of this is essential to the understanding of statistics at this stage. It was proposed however that this conflict between the mathematics required as a necessary part of in-service training per se and the mathematics required if it is regarded as part of a serious effort leading ultimately to a professional qualification could be resolved by making separate provision for the two categories. It is the view of ECA taking into account prevailing conditions in the region that it is firstly neither desirable nor feasible in national statistical offices to make separate provision for these two needs. Secondly, because of the career development aspects of such training courses and the fact that in many countries promotion is linked to the possession of a certificate, it is important that the course content of the in-service training be roughly equivalent to the certificate-level course and be accepted as such by the Directors of STPA centres as well as by governments. However, in those countries where this is not a problem, modification of the syllabus can be effected by the deletion of those sections considered too difficult and irrelevant to the needs of the particular national statistical office. A note of caution is however necessary. What is relevant in a course may not always be apparent, especially in situations where projects to strengthen national statistical offices are underway. In such cases the current and future needs must be taken into account before any modification of the course content is undertaken. Also a statistical assistant who compiles data should be able to spot obvious inaccuracies in his data such as an annual growth rate of 8.1 per cent for the population of a country which is subject to zero net international migration.

8. Other comments received related to the balance between demographic and social statistics on one hand and economic statistics on the other. It was argued that a rather large and disproportionate part of the syllabus has been given to economic statistics at the expense of demographic statistics. This view does not appear to take into account the normal balance between these two fields in national and international statistics. ECA can only reflect the existing situation and should not try to reflect the biases of individuals who commented on the draft Guide Syllabus.

9. It should be mentioned that not all the proposals received related to the simplification of the course. Others proposed the addition of more difficult topics. It was not possible for more difficult topics such as stochastic processes which were not related to the specific needs of African statistical offices to be included at this time.

10. Mention should also be made of the contributions of the UN specialized agencies in the field of agricultural, labour and health statistics. The proposals of the agencies have replaced the original formulation by the secretariat. In this connexion, it has been argued that agricultural statistics should occupy more time than the 30 hours previously allocated. It should be noted that agricultural, labour and health statistics are not always handled within the national statistical office. In a large number of African countries, agricultural statistics is the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture, labour statistics that of the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Health handles health statistics. For example as shown in Annex I, agricultural statistics is the responsibility of the national statistical office in only 19 out of the 50 countries in the region. Depending on the number of participants who work in these areas who are attending the course, suitable adjustments to the time allocation can be made. It is not enough to state that agricultural statistics is important. It must be relevant to the work programme of those participating in the training course to be given more than cursory attention.

11. Comments were also made with respect to the apparent duplication of topics between the first and second stages of the course. Some modification of the syllabus has been made to eliminate obvious duplications. However, it should be noted that not all double listings of topics imply duplication. The second stage listing implies more detailed consideration of the same topic.

Time Allocation in the Guide Syllabus

12. In the introduction to the Guide Syllabus, suggestions have been made with respect to the time to be allocated to certain subjects. This allocation is for guidance only and can be modified to suit the level of the trainees and the particular needs of the country. As implied in the previous section, if none of the trainees is engaged in agricultural or labour or health statistics, there is no need to devote too much time to these topics. A short course of a few hours duration on the objectives and scope of these fields of statistics would suffice. It should also be pointed out that the allocation does not provide for specialization at this stage. It is the view of those who prepared the Guide Syllabus that middle-level statistical personnel should be rotated among different sections of the office so that they can acquire a broad view of the different types of tasks performed by the national statistical office. It is however possible that sectoral ministries like the Ministry of Health may wish to take advantage of the courses provided for in-service training. In such cases some degree of flexibility should be exercised to enable personnel from such ministries to concentrate more closely on the work that they would be required to do. It should be noted that excluding the preliminary stage, the in-service training course is expected to last for nine months.

Arrangement of courses

13. It may be recalled that when the draft guide syllabus was circulated, no provision was made for a preliminary stage. The secretariat had previously identified the special needs of the Portuguese-speaking countries and had made arrangements for a special guide syllabus to be prepared for such countries. Parts of this special syllabus would have corresponded to the preliminary stage. However, representations received from a few national statistical offices outside the Portuguese-speaking countries made it necessary for a preliminary stage to be included in this Guide Syllabus. Thus, it is emphasised that for those without recent 'O' level passes in English and Mathematics, the preliminary stage would

be necessary. The preliminary stage syllabus is based to a large extent on the work done in Ghana and Zimbabwe. Progression from the preliminary stage to stage 1 would normally be on the basis of an end of stage examination. The same applies for progression from stage 1 to stage 2. Criteria should be determined for this progression on the basis of these examinations. It should be noted, however, that the preliminary stage should not be necessary for those with recent 'O' level passes. For such trainees, the initial course would be stage 1.

14. It may also be recalled as noted in the introduction in the Guide Syllabus that there are at least four types of in-service training: daily release, daily part-time, sandwich and more formal in-service training. The particular type selected in each country should take into account local conditions. In recent times a few countries like Ethiopia have used evening hours for mounting part-time training courses. This is certainly a possibility to be considered especially if such training would have some advantages for the trainees.

Teachers and teaching material

15. It is proposed that each national statistical office should designate one of its professional staff as the training officer. It will be the responsibility of the training officer to organize the in-service training course. However, owing to the diversity of courses to be taught, it is most unlikely that one person would be able to teach all these courses adequately. In any case, this would generally be undesirable. Therefore, the assistance of other professional staff both within and outside the national statistical offices may be required to enable the in-service training to be a success. In this connexion, it should be noted that most professional staff of national statistical offices have limited or no teaching experience. At the appropriate time, therefore, regional or sub-regional training courses for such organisers of in-service training should be convened. In addition, it is necessary for extensive documentation to be prepared for the guidance of such teachers. The Guide Syllabus does not mention any reference books. It was intended that such reference would be made in the teaching notes which ECA had intended to prepare. It has, however, been found that due to limited resources, ECA would not be able to fulfill this overall aim and some assistance from other quarters would be necessary. In this connexion, it should be mentioned that where the United Nations or other bilateral agencies are running in-service training courses such as in Zambia and Zimbabwe, some notes are available. Some work will however have to be done on these notes to make them suitable for adoption as guidelines for African countries. As already mentioned, the resources do not at present exist for ECA to undertake such an assignment.

16. Mention should also be made of the fact that for small countries with limited professional staff, external assistance will be necessary before in-service training of the type assumed in this paper can be mounted.

Admissibility of in-service training certificates by governments and STPA centres

17. As may be recalled from the first section of this paper, one of the objectives of the in-service training course is to make it possible for those who have successfully completed the course to be considered as equivalent to holders of the certificate in statistics awarded by STPA centres. Such recognition can only be given by governments and the STPA centres. As far as the STPA centres are concerned, there are a number of ways in which this recognition can be accorded. Firstly, the

graduate of the in-service training course could be granted a certificate by the STPA centre provided the examination at the end is organized in collaboration with the STPA centre. A second possibility is for candidates who have completed the in-service training course to be eligible to sit for the entrance examination of the diploma course without having to undertake a certificate course again. The third possibility would be for the national statistical office to award its own certificate which would be acceptable to the STPA centres. All such arrangements must also be accepted by the national government for purposes of establishment of posts, promotion and remuneration. It should be noted that some countries in the region have rigid rules on establishment of posts and that unless these arrangements are accepted by them the in-service training programme could bring problems of loss of morale.

Conclusion

18. This Guide Syllabus has been prepared for use in countries. It is expected that modifications would be made to it to suit local conditions. If the principles underlying its preparation are adhered to, there would be a substantial improvement in the performance of middle-level supporting staff in national statistical offices and other sectors. Each national statistical office should, therefore, establish, as a matter of urgency, an in-service training programme and appoint a professional statistician as a co-ordinator. The objective of such training should be clearly spelt out so that the trainees are left in no doubt about the reasons for the training courses.

19. The meeting of directors of STPA centres is invited:

- (a) to approve in principle the Guide-Syllabus,
- (b) to propose such modifications as it might deem necessary to improve the document, and
- (c) to endorse proposals that trainees who have successfully completed the in-service training programme can be admitted to the diploma course if they pass the admission examination.

COUNTRIES IN THE AFRICAN REGION WITH DIFFERENT AGENCIES
RESPONSIBLE FOR UNDERTAKING AGRICULTURAL AND
NON-AGRICULTURAL SURVEYS

	Economic and Social Surveys (CSO)	Agricultural Surveys (Min. of Agriculture)	Combined (CSO)
NORTH AFRICA			
Algeria	X	X	
Egypt	X	X	
Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	X	X	
Morocco			X
Sudan	X	X	
Tunisia			
WEST AFRICA			
Benin	X	X	
Cape Verde			X
Gambia			
Ghana	X	X	
Guinea	X	X	
Guinea Bissau			
Ivory Coast			X
Liberia			X
Mali			X
Mauritania			X
Niger			X
Nigeria			X
Senegal			X
Sierra Leone	X	X	
Togo	X	X	
Upper Volta			
CENTRAL AFRICA			
Angola			
Burundi			
Cameroon, United Rep. of	X	X	
Central Africa Republic			
Chad	X	X	
Congo, People's Rep. of			X
Equatorial Guinea			
Gabon			X
Rwanda			
Sao Tome & Principe			X
Zaire	X	X	

	Economic and Social Surveys (CSO)	Agricultural Surveys (Min. of Agriculture)	Combined (CSO)
EAST AFRICA			
Botswana	X	X	
Comoros			
Djibouti			
Ethiopia			X
Kenya			X
Lesotho			X
Madagascar	X	X	
Malawi			X
Mauritius			X
Mozambique			
Seychelles			X
Somalia			X
Swaziland	X	X	
Tanzania, United Rep. of	X	X	
Uganda			
Zambia			