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REPORT ON PIDSA'S ACTIVITIES IN POPIN-AFRICA
1986-1987

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POPIN-AFRICA 1985-87

Although PIDSA has engaged in documentation activities since the Project Phase I ended, this activity on a sub-regional basis has declined. The watering down of PIDSA's activities has been due mainly to the delay in the provision of funding for PIDSA Phase II. PIDSA Phase II was to be an integral and supportive part of the POPIN-Africa Project.

MISSION TO RIPS

At the last Advisory Committee Meeting in December 1985 this was what was said concerning the funding of PIDSA, when the issue of funding was raised: 'Regarding RIPS, the IDRC was planning a mission there early next year.' RIPS/PIDSA did not receive this visit. The result of this inability of the IDRC to visit RIPS had contributed largely to the lack of funding for PIDSA's operations. Thus, as of now, PIDSA's active participation in the population information and documentation activities under POPIN-Africa has been very low.

PECULIAR POSITION OF RIPS

RIPS within which PIDSA is based is an ECA-sponsored training institution. The budget of the Institute has been structured to cater for its teaching, research, publication and advisory services. PIDSA, therefore, was a project that certainly needed extra-funding to be operational. It still needs the promised-funding to be able to operate. Now that the budget of RIPS is being pruned down, it becomes even more inevitable that PIDSA must receive its special budget, because it will be difficult to accommodate PIDSA's expenditure in RIPS regular budget.

Although the First Advisory Committee recommended that 'bilateral arrangements should be sought to raise funds to supplement activities of the sub-regional participating centres', RIPS peculiar position demanded that RIPS should await the results of ECA's initiatives to obtain funding for PIDSA. If these failed; then any bilateral arrangement that PIDSA will have to make will either have to be with the approval of the ECA or in co-operation with the ECA. May be this is the time for PIDSA to prompt ECA to take up the issue of funding for PIDSA more seriously.

ASSETS

In spite of the low profile that the lack of funding has compelled PIDSA to keep in the activities of the POPIN-Africa Project, PIDSA has not lost its potentialities to serve as a dynamic node in the net-work.

As a training institution, RIPS continues to receive demographic and related materials through purchases and gifts mainly, and now at a diminishing rate, through exchange. These documents are processed for RIPS local needs mainly. The cost of these documents is increasing. The sources for them on the continent are either changing or expanding rapidly. Additional personnel, time, and money should be made available to enable RIPS/PIDSA keep tract of and acquire more of these specialized information to increase POPIN-Africa's data base.

Secondly, the two documentalists who worked on PIDSA Phase I still do work as Librarians/Documentalists for the Population and Social Sciences Library in which PIDSA is based. Thus, the operation of PIDSA is in addition to their normal duties as professional Librarians of the Institute.

Thirdly, there is a wealth of graduates, post-graduates as well as some teaching staff in the University of Ghana who could be hired and given short training in abstracting to write good abstracts which will be sent on POPIN-Africa Input-sheets to be integrated into the POPIN-Africa file.

There are also the machines, - namely: a photo-copier and a micro-film reader-printer - which could be repaired and put at the disposal of POPIN-Africa's referral and clearing-house activities.

Fourthly, and may be, most importantly, RIPS has gained additional experience since the POPIN-Africa programme took off. PIDSA staff has participated in various POPIN-Africa's Technical Task-Force meetings and contributed to the discussions and to the decisions on the POPIN-Africa guidelines and methodologies. PIDSA participated in POPIN-Africa's Study Tour to ASEAN POPIN in July 1986, which provided the POPIN-Africa's team with invaluable knowledge, experience as well as answers and adaptable prototypes to many of the problems that baffled the POPIN-Africa programme.

ATROPHY

Although all the knowledge and experience gained through PIDSA's participation in POPIN-Africa's programmes have improved service to our immediate clientele, all the assets that PIDSA has, and could use to promote the programmes of POPIN-Africa, seem to atrophy, largely due to PIDSA's inability to utilize our potentialities to the maximum in the required direction.

Difficulties in connection with the breakdown of equipment coupled with the shortage of staff reduced the little referral work that was carried on at PIDSA. There was no staff to process the POPIN-Africa Data-Input Sheet. Between September 1984 and May 1987 there was only one professional staff in the Library with two middle-level personnel to assist with about 7 Library attendants. Now one of the professional staff at the Library who worked on PIDSA Phase I has returned to the Library in May 1987 after her study leave abroad. Even her return has not provided answers to PIDSA's staff problems because PIDSA's functions will form additional load to already over-loaded schedules in the Library. It was impossible during the period under review to monitor seminars and conferences in population on the continent. PIDSA heard of most of them when they were over. Acquisition of documentation on such seminars was difficult.

INPUT

However, PIDSA was able to provide only forty processed documents to be included in POPINDEX-Africa. This was at the personal expense of the PIDSA staff. PIDSA supplied, in response to specific request over eighty-two photo-copies of documents to our clients around the continent. It could have been more. We could not help after the breakdown of the photo-copier during the last half of 1986.

May be the most significant contribution PIDSA has made to POPIN-Africa is by advertising POPIN-Africa. Whenever PIDSA's former clients and subscribers write to inquire about PIDSA Abstracts they were informed that the journal had been superceded by POPINDEX-Africa. They were then informed to direct their enquires to the POPIN-Africa Co-ordinator whose address PIDSA provided.

PROJECTS

The only project which PIDSA is most likely to complete by the close of the year is the compilation of a list of Social Science Journals published in Africa. The end of November, 1987 has been set as the dateline. After this time PIDSA will put the list it has obtained so far into a systematic format.

PIDSA is also exploring the possibility of compiling the Country Bibliography of Ghana Population.