

16977

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN STATISTICIANS
FIRST CONFERENCE
28 SEPTEMBER TO 8 OCTOBER, 1959
ADDIS-ABABA, ETHIOPIA.

WP. 9

U.K. - 4.

Provisional Agenda Item No. 4

STATISTICS IN TERRITORIES WITHOUT QUALIFIED STATISTICIANS

with special reference to

Sierra Leone, Gambia and Somaliland Protectorates

Prepared by Colonial Office,
United Kingdom

STATISTICS IN TERRITORIES WITHOUT QUALIFIED STATISTICIANSwith special reference toSierra Leone, Gambia and Somaliland Protectorates

In territories without qualified Statisticians the collection and analysis of statistics must be the responsibility of the operating Departments. While being largely of a routine character, this statistical work does from time to time take the form of special enquiries. For ad hoc work, either to meet a special problem or to improve recurrent departmental activity in the field of statistics, outside experts are sometimes used; for example, for the revision or introduction of a retail price index or a study of land use based on air photography.

The quality of statistics provided in the course of administration by the various departments must vary considerably and much depends on the degree of interest shown by the senior officers of the Department concerned. Some statistics, moreover, suffer less from routine departmental handling than others - for example it is easier to collect statistics of school enrolments than a good series of price statistics in a period of fairly rapid economic change.

The position varies from territory to territory and over time in any territory. The following is a generalised account of the situation in the territories under consideration.

POPULATION

A census is largely an administrative operation and it is within the capacity of these territories to provide minimum information on sex, broad age groups and tribe for the whole population. Further information can be collected in the main urban areas.

Statistics on fertility and mortality cannot easily be obtained by means of the census; in these fields the sample enquiries which are more appropriate are not normally within the range of such territories.

Migration can be enumerated as part of the normal frontier control at sea and air ports and thus summarised data can be prepared but adequate administrative means for controlling the land frontiers do not exist.

Distribution of population by kinds of household requires the prior definition of household in a manner which would suit the requirements of census-taking and is likely to be beyond the scope of a census seen primarily as an administrative task.

LABOUR

A Department of Labour, as part of its usual activities, collects returns of employees in the principal industries including large enterprises in agriculture. Similarly, information on wages and salaries, at least in broad ranges, is obtained. Estimates of unemployment however require a statistician to devise and supervise suitable enquiries. This is even more important when working conditions in subsistence areas are under investigation.

AGRICULTURE

The resources of Agricultural Departments are devoted almost entirely to measures designed directly to improve levels of cultivation. Where there are local marketing boards, or where crops enter into external trade, partial statistics of sales can be made available. Some further information may be available from transport records but a statistician is probably required to make the best use of these sources.

Prices at which commercial crops are sold in larger markets can be obtained from market intelligence sources but the prices received by farmers, where marketing boards do not exist, may require expert investigation.

Estimates of annual gross capital formation in agricultural machinery (1) almost all of which would be imported, should be possible from trade returns.

FORESTRY

Where these are important natural resources, departmental records usually provide useful statistics on reserves and production.

FISHING

The numbers of certain types of craft are available from registration procedures but the size of catches is beyond the capacity of these territories.

INDUSTRY

Generally speaking, industrial production is not of importance in these territories. Its extent can be shown by reference to employment returns.

TRANSPORT

Broadly speaking full information is available (although not necessarily extracted) on the operation of railways and on the arrival and departure of ships and aircraft. If water transport is provided as a Government service it is in the same position as the railways. Road vehicles are licensed and therefore simple analyses are possible.

EDUCATION

Subject to the difficulties of obtaining full information about voluntary

(1) Where the principal items concerned are imported, approximate estimates of total capital formation, covering all sectors, should be within the capacity of these territories, although an analysis by industry may not be practicable.

schools the school registers provide the basic information on enrolment and the Education Departments can provide statistics on numbers and types of schools, number of teachers and the enrolment figures.

HEALTH SERVICES

Medical Departments can provide information on the numbers of registered physicians and other qualified persons and, subject to the possible ambiguity in definitions, numbers of hospital beds and hospital admissions. Some medical offices are interested in a statistical analyses and produce detailed analyses.

EXTERNAL TRADE

The compilation and publication of comprehensive external trade statistics is normal practice. The published annual analyses of imports, domestic exports and re-exports include tabulations of value and quantity of commodities by countries and of aggregate trade by countries. Full details are available at any time in the territory itself but published monthly or quarterly analyses may be very simple.

Index numbers of volume and unit value cannot be calculated by the Customs Department staff.

MONEY AND BANKING

Banking statistics are available but not necessarily published because the figures might reveal the affairs of individual banks.

Official holdings of foreign assets are normally used by the central government (see under Government below).

No estimate of balance of payments is made unless an interested officer in the Finance Department uses information on visible trade and government transactions combined with his special knowledge of other large transactions.

GOVERNMENT

The economic and functional classification of government account is clearly a matter for the specialised Statistician but such items as cash receipts and disbursements, changes in cash holdings and public debt and the revenue from each main tax are a normal product of administration.

PERSONAL INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Apart from taxation records, which in any event apply only to part of the range of personal incomes, statistics under this head are obtained from budgetary surveys. With the lack of specialised statisticians to design and supervise such surveys, work of this kind is not practicable unless it forms part of a research project undertaken by visiting experts.

It is also impracticable for these territories to organise a budgetary survey for the purpose of a retail index without outside assistance and, as in the Somaliland Protectorate, expert help is still required for the alternative methods of calculating weights by drawing for example upon external trade and internal marketing information. The introduction of a satisfactory price collecting system demands similar assistance. But once established, and subject to advice in making periodic adjustments, the index can be adequately maintained as part of the work of an appropriate department.

HOUSING

These territories are not in a position to undertake experimental surveys.

Statistics Department,

Colonial Office

6 August, 1959