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REPORTING, PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION
OF SURVEY RESULTS

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Introduction

1. One of the main objectives of the African Household Survey Capability Programme is to provide improved data on households especially in the fields of employment, other productive activity, income, consumption and expenditure, demographic and interrelated statistics etc. Such data will enable African governments to have adequate information on their economies on a continuing basis for planning and other purposes. However, the mere collection of the data will not constitute a fulfilment of this objective. The results of the survey must be presented in the form of one or a variety of reports and published and widely disseminated in order that the ultimate aim of the programme may be seen to have been achieved.

Role of Publications and Dissemination Committee

2. It has become recognised that in order to determine the content and methodology of a survey in a country, a Steering or Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) should be set up to help the national statistical office in its work. This committee which should be made up of producers and users of statistics has proved useful in a number of countries in respect of the conduct of the 1970 and 1980 rounds of population censuses in Africa. The same or a similar committee should be set up to review and monitor the publications and disseminations programme of the survey. Its terms of reference should include the definition and delimitation of the publications programme, the determination of the content of the various reports, the working out of a publications schedule and the preparation of the corresponding budget. As already stated, this committee could be the same or different from the TAC or could, preferably, be a sub-committee of the TAC.

3. It should be composed of probable users of the statistics to be generated from the household surveys in addition to the relevant staff of the national statistical office. Experts in the publications or communications field should either be full members or should be co-opted when required. With respect to the preparation of the publications schedule, the committee should take into account the principle of the timeliness of data. Thus it should aim at publishing the important results of the survey within reasonable time. In terms of the AHSCP, "reasonable time" would imply that the basic survey tables should be available preferably not more than 12 months after the completion of the field enumeration. This has implications for coding, data entry, automatic editing and processing and all these factors must be taken into account.

4. The publications and disseminations budget is also an important item which has to be emphasized. A number of surveys have been done in Africa which have not been published due to lack of funds. It is important that in the planning stage of the survey adequate provision is made for this aspect of the survey programme.

Determination of the Content of Reports

5. By far the most important of the tasks of the Publications and Dissemination Committee will be the determination of the types of reports to be published and the content of each report. This has to take account of the needs of users, budgetary and publications schedule constraints etc. It is likely that the example set by the World Fertility Survey (WFS) will be emulated by many African countries. In this example, there were two country reports: the first contained the basic tables with concise explanatory description, in addition to the equivalent of an administrative and methodological report, while the second volume was expected to contain the detailed analysis of the country data. This did not of course rule out monographs on specific topics by interested organizations.

6. While the WFS approach may influence a number of African countries, it is worth noting that the WFS itself is a single subject survey, while the AHSCP aims at an integrated multi-subject approach. There may therefore be the need for more than two volumes in the surveys programme. A possible arrangement of survey items by report is as follows:

- (a) Volume I: Basic tables on core items with explanatory description plus administrative and methodological report
- (b) Volume II: Basic tables on module items plus tables on module items cross-classified by core items with concise explanatory description
- (c) Volume III: Detailed analysis of all survey results.

7. In view of the scope and range of data collected in any survey round, there may be the need for a number of monographs on specific topics.

8. It should also be mentioned that in view of the advent of the microfiche and microfiche reader, not all results which are tabulated need be published. Some information which may be of interest to a selected group of users may be stored on microfiche. This will cut down considerably the cost of printing additional tables in the survey reports.

9. Another point which should be stressed is that in some surveys a multi-phase sampling approach is used. To avoid different sets of data based on samples and sub-samples from different phases yielding different totals either use should be made of appropriate ratio estimation techniques to obtain identical totals or the tables should be divided into two or more sets depending on the sampling arrangements.

10. In the preparation of the reports themselves, use of graphs and charts may save considerable description and will serve as a visual aid to the reader. Thus wherever appropriate graphs and charts should be used.

Authorship of Reports

11. Reports may be prepared by a single person or a group of persons. When a report is prepared by a single person, there are no serious problems of co-ordination. However, when a report is prepared by more than one person then the question of co-ordination becomes paramount. There have been several instances where a report has been constituted by separate essays contributed by different persons without any attempt to blend them into single coherent dissertation. When it becomes necessary for a report or reports to be prepared by more than one person, there is need to designate one of them as a co-ordinator with the primary function of ensuring that the different pieces of the report(s) fit together.

12. Another relevant consideration is whether the principal persons involved in the preparation of the reports should be named. It is not usual government practice to ascribe any government publication to one or more persons. It has been argued that this practice acts as a disincentive to the production of analytical reports of a high quality. A person in a university or a similar research institution knows that what he is producing could in future be used to further the development of his career and thus he puts a lot of effort into the work. The government official on the other hand has no such assurance. Even if he refers to the report as his own work, there is no evidence to support this. However, it can be argued that no government publication is the outcome of one or a small group of individuals. It is the final product in a long chain

of work starting with planners and advisory committees through field enumeration, coding, keying, editing, tabulation etc. It would be wrong therefore to single out a few individuals and ascribe to them the authorship of the final product. A compromise solution which has been tried out in a number of developing and developed countries is to list the key figures in the division with the ultimate responsibility for the survey. How far this compromise will go in generating sufficient enthusiasm among government officials in African countries to produce works of excellence can only be gauged after it has been tried out in the survey programme in a number of countries.

13. A related question is whether in view of the complexities of the analytical techniques to be employed in analysing the survey data, the national statistical office will have sufficient high level manpower to undertake the analysis by itself. In this context, the WFS experience is worth noting. It was planned that the Volume I reports should be prepared by the national organizations which conducted the surveys. But it was anticipated that the more detailed analysis may in many cases be done by an organization or person(s) other than the original survey organization. In the AHSCP it can be anticipated that similar procedures may have to be adopted. While national statistical offices should be encouraged to do research, there is a limit to the amount of in-depth analysis they will regard as part of their legitimate functions. Thus, from the very beginning of the planning of the survey activities, the Publications and Dissemination Committee may have to work out specific collaborative arrangements with appropriate persons within a university or a research organization for the more detailed analysis of the survey data. The report prepared under such arrangements however should be published by the national statistical office.

Printing of Reports

14. The most difficult problem connected with the publication of reports is the printing of the statistical tables. In Africa three main methods have been used in the past. These are:

- (a) type setting;
- (b) varityping or typing with improved type of electric typewriter plus photo offset printing;
- (c) computer print-outs with photo offset printing.

A fourth method which has been suggested for use in the publication of the results of the 1980 population census results in a few African countries is computer print-outs followed by the use of a photo-copier duplicator.

15. The fourth method is the fastest but there is no evidence of it having been tried out yet in Africa and so no appraisal of its advantages and disadvantages can be made. The first method of type setting is time-consuming due mainly to the need to check and recheck the proofs. Its main advantage is that there is greater variety in the type sets (e.g. italics, bold) which can be used. The varityper is not as time consuming as the ordinary type-setting procedure, since corrections can easily be made and checked. The third method is the fastest of the three but it involves programming the data to come out in the format of the publication. The presentation of the data can be improved by the use of the varityper to type table headings etc. In more developed countries there are computer devices which can be used to eliminate or minimise recourse to the varityper.

16. Many countries in Africa may have to make use of this third approach in publishing their tables. The text can be typed or type-set since this part of the printing of the report is not time-consuming.

Dissemination of Results

17. One of the most serious mistakes made by statisticians in this region is the assumption, inherent in the types of publications and their distribution list, that survey results are meant for fellow statisticians, planners and researchers. In fact there are four different categories of the population to be reached by the survey results. These are:

- (a) Planners and researchers;
- (b) Policy-makers;
- (c) Administrators;
- (d) The general public.

The first category can be reached by the conventional statistical and analytical reports. The second and third categories require simpler versions of the survey results. Here consideration is given to two examples of ways of trying to reach these categories of the population. The first is the WFS example of country summaries covering about 15 pages which highlight the salient features of the survey results. The second is the "Social Perspectives" publication of Kenya, prepared by UNICEF with the aim of summarising in simple form the major results of social surveys undertaken in Kenya. Although no impact study has been carried out in relation to these two publications, there is reason to believe that they reach a wider readership than the more technical reports.

18. The dissemination of survey results to the general public, however, requires great care. The national newspapers and magazines such as West Africa and Africa are widely read. Any suitable article couched in laymen's language is therefore likely to have an impact on the average reader. Special brief press releases are not enough. There is need for a popular-oriented commentary. This cannot usually be done by the statistical office. There is need to establish collaborative arrangements, sometimes on a personal basis, with the press. It is only by so doing that the national statistical office would be seen to have discharged fully its obligation to collect, analyse, publish and disseminate survey data.

19. An important issue linked with dissemination is sale of survey publications. In certain countries, there are standard sale arrangements and thus no problems should theoretically exist. However in other cases, these publications are issued free to specified persons but persons not in this category find it impossible to obtain copies since there is no machinery for selling or issuing copies to them. Thus, it is important for the national statistical office to make arrangements for all those who genuinely require copies of survey reports to have them.

Conclusion

20. In this paper there has been extensive discussion of the subject of reporting, publication and dissemination because it is one of the topics which generally gets overlooked in survey planning, sometimes with disastrous results. The main point being made in this paper therefore is that like the other aspects of survey planning and organization, this subject requires considerable thought and no survey is complete until the results have been published and widely disseminated.