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**GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF POPULATION PROGRAMMING
IN THE UNITED NATIONS**

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GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF POPULATION PROGRAMMING IN THE UNITED NATIONS

1. "Population" is one of a number of substantive areas in which the United Nations system of organizations develops programmes designed to promote the achievement of economic and social development of the world.
2. From the very beginning, members of the Population Commission felt that demographic considerations are of direct practical relevance to many aspects of economic and social development. Development programmes aim at building an economy which can more fully meet the needs of the people, and the specific needs depend not only upon the size of the population, but also upon its composition and geographical distribution. Further, it is not enough to consider only the population at the particular point of time at which the programme is prepared; as far as possible, probable future changes in that population must be taken into account in order that suitable provision for those changes may be made in the plans for economic development. It is, in addition, important to take into account population changes which may result from the implementation of the development plans. Such population changes form part of the problem of developing and applying productive resources to meet the needs of the people. One of the primary resources is labour supply, and the volume and the characteristics of that labour supply depend mainly upon the size, composition and distribution of the population.
3. In establishing the Population Commission in 1946, the ECOSOC stipulated that its first task should be "to draw up, with all reasonable speed, and submit to the Council for approval, a specific programme of work, based on its terms of reference and taking into account any modifications in those terms of reference which the Commission may wish to recommend to the Council".^{1/}
4. The terms of reference of the Commission at its inception were "to arrange for studies and advise the Council on:
 - (a) Population changes, the factor associated with such changes, and the policies designed to influence these factors;
 - (b) Inter-relationship of economic and social conditions and population trends;
 - (c) Migratory movements of population and factors associated with such movements;
 - (d) Any other population problems on which the principal or subsidiary organs of the United Nations or the specialized agencies may seek advice".

^{1/} Resolution 3 (III).

5. In translating these terms of reference into a programme of work, the Commission began with the premise that regular provision of accurate, comparable and comprehensive statistical and other data concerning populations and population movements was of the greatest importance to the United Nations and the specialized agencies. They felt that such data are a necessary prerequisite for discussions not only of population questions, as such, but also of many other economic and social questions. Its 1947 Work Programme, therefore, contained the recommendation that a Demographic Yearbook of the United Nations be published; and that direct measures be taken to improve basic demographic data. Thus was established the first basic principle of programming in the population field, that is, that promotion of the development and improvement of demographic statistics should be a matter of first priority.

6. Having stated its first principle, the Commission went on to say that when this work was well underway, emphasis should be shifted to the analysis of available data with a view to providing the Council and Member States with the information necessary for taking demographic factors into account in the development of economic and social policies. It was suggested specifically, (1) that studies of the population of Trust Territories be undertaken; (2) that national studies of population growth and economic conditions be encouraged and (3) that a plan of study be drawn up of the interplay of economic, social and demographic factors which hinders the attainment of an adequate standard of living. The latter was conceived as the basis for a long-range programme of future work.

7. With its first programme of work, therefore, the Commission established two basic principles of programming: first, that improvement of demographic statistics is, fundamental and second, that studies of the interplay of demographic economic and social factors and a better understanding of these interrelations must underlie sound advice on policies designed to influence the size and structure of population. Attention must be given to research, field investigations, and pilot studies which will provide a rapid increase in the much needed knowledge regarding the interplay between demographic factors and economic and social conditions in areas for which statistical data are scant.

8. In recommending these studies, the Commission also emphasized the importance of presenting the results of demographic findings in the form which will be of most direct use to administrators and officials engaged in deliberations bearing on programmes of economic and social development. These two principles have governed the basic work programme of the Commission since that time.

9. A third fundamental principle began to emerge in 1948 when the General Assembly at its third session, appropriated funds for a programme

of technical assistance to be rendered by the United Nations to Member States for the economic development of under-developed areas. A greatly expanded programme in this field was authorized in 1949 and in response to this the Population Commission at its fifth session in 1950 emphasized the importance of taking demographic factors into account in considering the development of under-developed countries, and of providing technical assistance in the demographic field.

10. In considering the ways in which technical assistance in demographic matters might be of help to developing countries, the Commission suggested provision of a team of experts in various fields to initiate field surveys, etc. They also recommended that one of the most valuable forms of technical assistance is the training of personnel to deal with problems at the national level. Thus was born the third principle of programming, namely, to provide technical assistance centred around advisory services and training of personnel. In case of conflict of interests, a fourth principle underlying all three was that effort should be concentrated along those lines of work in which the greatest practical contribution could be made to the priority programmes of the United Nations in the economic and social fields.

11. The four principles so far annunciated make clear that the principal object of the demographic work of the United Nations should be to help Governments in the technologically less developed areas to understand the structure and trends of their population, to explore and determine the connexions between these factors and social and economic change and to utilize this knowledge in deciding and carrying out their policies. However, it must be recognized that the acquisition, processing and use of demographic data all require large-scale endeavour, and when thought of on a world basis, they involve many specialists working under varied conditions, using different languages, and having different outlooks. The demographic work of the United Nations accordingly requires, as one of its aims, the furthering of contact among experts, specialists, and officials concerned with population, to exchange practical knowledge and experience. The desirability of establishing co-operative arrangements for reaching the goals of the programme thus becomes a fifth principle.

12. As early as its 7th session, the Population Commission had recognized the need for co-ordination in the planning and execution of population projects initiated by itself and by the regional commissions. The principle of coordinated efforts was brought even more fully to the fore when work on population was expanded as a result of the General Assembly Resolution 2211 of 1966. The multi-disciplinary nature of population research, training, content of meetings and seminars, etc. only reinforced the Commission's earlier view that problems of population are intricately interrelated with those of economic and social development and thus demand collaborative effort among agencies. The mandates of the Specialized Agencies have

been considerably broadened in recent years, so that a far wider range of assistance in population is now available upon request to interested Governments within the developing regions. The Commission stressed that in providing that assistance, the United Nations and the specialized agencies should maintain the closest possible co-ordination. Recognition of the interdisciplinary nature of the work and coordination is thus a basic principle of programming in the population field which underline all of the basic goals set forth in the first four principles.

13. The changes which have taken place in the world population situation in the last twenty years caused by the considerable decline in mortality emphasized the need for intensified effort on the part of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies to assist developing countries in their efforts to accelerate social and economic development. In response to these changes, the Population Commission expressed the wish to have a flexible work programme such as would meet the changing needs of member States, particularly developing nations. They felt that periodic assessment of the programme was very necessary to assure adjustment of programmes, organizational and administrative arrangements and means of financing. Adaptability can be best achieved if the programme is envisaged as having three components, i.e., country, regional and headquarters with adequate co-ordination at all levels. Viewed in this way, an imbalance began to be observed during 1966-67 and the Commission at its 14th session recommended that more emphasis be placed on action-oriented programmes at the regional and country levels, especially in the African, Latin American, and ECAFE regions where population problems were considered to be most acute.

14. Thus was born a sixth principle of programming in the population field, that is, greater emphasis on action programmes at the regional and country levels. The effect of this principle is especially apparent in the weight given to projects and programmes in technical cooperation in the programme of work adopted by the Population Commission at its 15th session. It is also apparent in the proposals for research & technical work in which priority is given to those projects which could serve as practical tools for policy making or support field activities.

15. The Population Commission has been, since its inception, continuously aware that execution of programmes in the field of population requires a adequate staff and other resources both at Headquarters and at the regional level as well as in the Specialized Agencies. The Commission was and is convinced that the importance of the work fully warrants a major effort to provide such resources and programmes are therefore developed on the principle of adequate financing.

16. At its 14th session, the Commission reiterated the need for securing additional resources commensurate with the increasing attention being given to population matters by various UN bodies. To supplement

the resources to be obtained from UNDP and the regular budget of the UN the Secretary General established in 1967 a Trust Fund, later renamed UN Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), the goal of which was to obtain, on a voluntary basis, additional funds from Governments and private sources.

17. The scope and objectives of the Fund were to assist Governments in determining the size and composition of population, in assessing population trends, in understanding the consequences of population trends in relation to economic and social development, in formulating population policies, in adopting population policies, in carrying out and evaluating such policies, as well as in training of the personnel required. It was intended that the Fund should be "action oriented" and that it should promote the most effective ways towards the solution of the population problems, particularly in developing countries.

18. In 1969 the Secretary-General entrusted the administration of the Fund to the Administrator of the UNDP. If the Fund demonstrates its ability to discharge its business as a programming and funding agency effectively and energetically, the expansion of work in the population field, as requested by the Population Commission and endorsed by ECOSOC and the General Assembly will be able to be supported with the degree of flexibility required.

Summary

19. Although they may not be fully comprehensive, it seems clear that nine principles have evolved to underlie programming for population by the United Nations. These principles also, of course, must by definition underlie programming at the regional level, inasmuch as the regional commissions act as the extension of the United Nations which brings it closer to the country level. The nine principles which have been identified here, and which can be traced in the work programme of the Population Commission for the coming years are the following:

- (1) Promotion of development and improvement of demographic statistics
- (2) Analysis of available data to assist countries in development of economic and social policies.
- (3) Provision of advisory services and of training of personnel through technical cooperation.
- (4) Priority to work which provides the greatest practical contribution to programmes in the fields of economic and social development.

- (5) Establishment of arrangements for cooperative action between world, regional and local levels in execution of projects.
- (6) Establishment and maintenance of inter-regional and, inter-disciplinary coordination.
- (7) Flexibility in programming, with periodic reassessment of goals and progress.
- (8) Emphasis on action-oriented programmes at regional and country level.
- (9) Provision of adequate and flexible financing.