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Fourth Conference of African Statisticians
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PROGRAMME OF WORK

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DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STATISTICS

1. In 1963 the Third Conference of African Statisticians drew up a programme of work which was intended to cover a five year period. Progress made during the last two years is described in the Report on Statistical Activities since the Third Conference of African Statisticians, (E/CN.14/CAS.4/8) and it is now necessary to decide priorities in respect of outstanding projects as well as new work which should be introduced in the future. The following notes are provided to assist the Fourth Conference in its deliberations on this matter and they should be considered in conjunction with any new or revised proposals arising from the discussions of the Conference on substantive topics.

2. The notes are arranged in the same way as the projects and activities described in Part V of the Annual Report of the Economic Commission for Africa in the Programme of Work and Priorities, 1965-67, (E/CN.14/343/Rev.1). This section has been reproduced in document E/CN.14/CAS.4/6 on matters arising from the 6th and 7th Sessions of the ECA, which has been circulated to the Conference. Since it includes descriptions of the various items in the work programme, they are not repeated here.

(1) Statistical Survey of Africa

3. It should be noted that the "Statistical Survey" is not, in fact a survey, but covers ECA activities which are connected with technical assistance to individual countries.

4. Although reasonable contact has been maintained with the national statistical offices in matters concerning technical assistance, this activity requires further development. It is proposed that work in this connection should gradually become a function of the ECA Sub-Regional Offices.

5. Country experts are, as far as possible, always briefed at ECA Headquarters before commencing their assignments. Contact on technical matters is maintained during the course of their work by means of their regular reports.

6. The regional advisory service has for some time been in the position where requests received from countries are more than can be handled by the existing five advisers. The Third Conference of African Statisticians recommended the establishment of three additional posts in statistical programming, national accounts and data processing. Financial limitations have so far prevented recruitment and additional needs are now becoming apparent, particularly in fields such as industrial statistics. An approach is being made to bilateral agencies for assistance.

(ii) Regional co-operation in training statistical personnel

7. It is suggested that the work programme in this connection should concentrate on implementing the recommendations contained in the Report of the Meeting of Directors of Middle Level Statistical Training Centres, (E/CN.14/CAS.4/3). These may be listed briefly as follows:

- (a) The Achimota centre should be merged with the Institute of Statistics in the University of Ghana from 1966-67 onwards so that facilities may be provided for training junior professional statisticians.
- (b) The Addis Ababa centre should continue to operate in its present form.
- (c) An additional middle level centre should be established in Cairo for Arabic speaking students.
- (d) When the new centre in Dar-es-Salaam is firmly established, consideration should be given to the possibility of introducing higher level courses similar to those envisaged in (a) above.

- (e) Facilities should be established at Ibadan University in co-operation with the Federal Office of Statistics, Nigeria for the training of junior professional statisticians. The courses would be at approximately the same level as those indicated under (a) above and would also operate on an international basis.
- (f) At the Yaoundé centre, the number of places available in the existing "Agent Technique" courses should be increased and additional facilities should be established at the "Adjoint Technique" level. These arrangements would be regarded as an intermediate stage in implementing Resolution 146(VII) of the Seventh Session of the Commission, which requested inter alia consideration of the converting the Yaoundé centre into an international statistical training institute for Africans.
- (g) Additional fellowships should be provided for the Abidjan centre.

8. In connection with the above recommendations it should be noted that higher level training facilities in Africa are already available for French speaking students at the Rabat statistical centre which is now becoming a Special Fund project.

9. ECA is already making contact with bilateral agencies which might be able to help in implementing the above proposals.

(iii) Formulation of statistical standards for the region

10. Of the seminars and working groups coming under this project heading, which were proposed by the Third Conference of African Statisticians in its recommended five year programme, the following are still outstanding:

- (1) Seminar on agricultural statistics.
- (2) Seminar on distribution statistics with special reference to the use of sampling techniques in investigating small scale enterprises.
- (3) Seminar on national accounts at constant prices.
- (4) Working Group on data processing.

11. No action has so far been taken to organise the seminar on agricultural statistics. The ECA Secretariat would, of course, always be pleased to co-operate with FAO in organising such a meeting. It is hoped that the second two seminars indicated above can be arranged in 1966. The prospect for convening a working group on data processing are discussed in paragraph 32 below.

12. In addition to these outstanding items, there are a number of more recent points which need to be taken into consideration.

13. The Seminar on housing statistics proposed initially for 1965 and postponed for lack of funds is now financed and scheduled for the fall of 1966.

14. The Working Group on Censuses of Population and Housing, which met in June 1965, recommended a further meeting to consider the draft 1970 African Programme for Censuses of Population and Housing. This meeting would pay special attention to priorities with respect to items of information to be collected and to tabulation programmes. In order to be properly co-ordinated with preparations for the world census programme, the meeting should take place before March 1966. Details in this respect are given in E/CN.14/CAS.4/12, Formulation of the African Programme for the 1970 Censuses of Population Housing.

15. The International Labour Organisation have suggested a further meeting on labour statistics, in implementation of the recommendations' of the first African Seminar on labour statistics.

16. The Working Group on the Revision of the UN System of National Accounts, which met in July 1965, suggested that further work on the adaptation of the new system to African conditions may need to be undertaken.

17. One of the principal fields of growing importance in which the Secretariat has not so far been active is the methodology relating to industrial statistics and the applications of this data. It is suggested that consideration might be given to including this as an item in the work programme. It would be an important extension of the work already carried out on statistical programming and would also be relevant to activities in the field of national accounts.

18. The above considerations suggest the following programme of meetings:

- (1) Seminar on distribution statistics with special reference to sampling techniques.
- (2) Seminar on national accounts at constant prices.
- (3) Seminar on housing statistics.
- (4) Second meeting of the working group on censuses of population and housing.
- (5) Second seminar on labour statistics.
- (6) Working group on methodology and applications of industrial statistics.
- (7) Working group on the adaptation of the revised SNA to African conditions.

19. When the Conference has revised the suggestions made above, the Secretariat will proceed with arrangements for preparatory research work. It is envisaged that the meetings will have to be spread over a period of about two years, which means that it is important to assign priorities.

(iv) Exchange of information on statistical activities

20. A number of projects are included under the heading of exchange of information and suggestions with respect to these are made below.

21. It should be noted that, as a result of decisions reached at the Seventh Session of the Commission, the Secretariat is developing the use of multi-subject sub-regional meetings as a means of promoting co-ordination of activities. It is likely that there will be considerable advantages in organising sub-regional statistical discussions in conjunction with these meetings, instead of treating them as separate projects, as in the past.

22. The Secretariat has no proposals in respect of study tours which might be undertaken in the near future and the budgetary position would make it difficult to organise such projects.

23. It is proposed that the Statistical Newsletter, which appears on a quarterly basis, should be developed along more technical lines.

24. The staff position has not yet permitted the preparation of a methodological manual on household surveys, as previously requested. In the meantime, the Handbook of Household Surveys, (Series F, No. 10) has been issued by the UN Statistical Office. The Handbook goes a long way towards meeting requirements for methodological guidance in this field, but there may still be need for a document which examines some of the specific applications of household surveys in Africa. This could also cover the analysis of food consumption surveys, which is another project mentioned in the report of the Third Conference.

25. A new bibliography of African statistical publications is in course of preparation.

26. It is suggested that the compilation of a list of technical coefficients for the use of planners should be deleted temporarily from the programme. Some guidance may be found in the United Nations publication on the Growth of World Industry ST/STAT/SER.P/2. However, not enough is known about this subject at the present time in Africa and any results published too hastily could be misleading. ECA will be in a position to take the project up again after there has been the opportunity of making a closer examination of national industrial statistics.

27. African experiences arising from the 1963 Industrial Census Programme would be considered in the industrial statistics project to which reference is made in section (iii) of this note. It is suggested that there would be no advantage in preparing a separate report.

28. The study of demographic enquiries, to which reference is made in the work programme, has already been largely completed in the various working papers connected with the forthcoming census arrangements. It seems important that all questions relating to demographic statistics should be closely integrated.

29. It has already been suggested above that analysis of food consumption surveys might be included in the more general document on household surveys. However, the Conference may wish to consider whether this is in fact an item of special importance.

30. An analysis of statistical staff requirements has been included in the working paper dealing with training E/CN.14/CAS.4/9 on the basis of information so far received from the countries. A revised report can be prepared when more complete data are available and it is suggested that this is a matter which needs to be kept under fairly continuous review. The Secretariat feels that it should draw the attention of the Conference to the fact that this type of project is difficult to execute because of the very slow response. As a result, it was necessary for the Directors of training centres to base proposals for the future development of their projects on an assessment of current demand instead of estimates of requirements.

(v) Regional co-operation in the field of data processing

31. The Third Conference of African Statisticians recommended that the capacity of the Mechanical Unit at ECA Headquarters should be increased in order to provide better facilities for research, demonstration and processing on a service basis. This could be done satisfactorily only by installing a small computer and no change in equipment has yet been possible. The guidance of the Conference on this question would be welcomed, but it should be remembered that implementation is dependent on resources available.

32. The Third Conference also recommended that a group of experts should be convened to review data processing problems in Africa and to draw up a programme of regional co-operation. It has to be remembered that, while bilateral arrangements may be made by countries to assist one another in data processing under special circumstances, e.g. analysis of the Bechuanaland census in Rhodesia, most countries wish to develop their own processing facilities. In addition, data processing is a function which is closely associated with each individual branch of statistics and it might well be better to consider it in conjunction with the other aspects of work

on each substantive subject, since in every case, the problems are different. It seems inappropriate to regard a statistical office's data processing unit as anything more than an essential service; it is not part of the basic programme of work. It is therefore suggested that, instead of convening a meeting in the near future to discuss this subject as a special topic, the Secretariat might produce a paper summarising the current situation and drawing some tentative conclusions on African requirements. This could be circulated early in 1966, and countries might then be in a better position to assess which problems require mutual discussion.

(11) Processing and publication of statistical data

33. There is a rapidly increasing demand for the production of regional statistics. This arises partly from co-operative efforts towards economic development and partly from the requirement that individual countries, ECA and other organisations should be in a position to assess the general situation in Africa. ECA is in a good position to compile such statistics and this function therefore has to be regarded as a part of the work programme which is of vital importance.

34. The first issue of the Statistical Bulletin for Africa is expected to be distributed in October 1965. The bulletin on Foreign Trade Statistics of Africa, (Series A and Series B) is already appearing regularly. Work is still proceeding on the bulletin on Production Statistics (agricultural, mining and industrial commodities). It is proposed that these three publications should initially be regarded as the basic means by which ECA should circulate statistical series for the region, insofar as the data are available.

35. The Statistics and Demography Division also has the essential task of providing statistical data needed in connection with projects for which other divisions of the Secretariat have responsibility. We have therefore reached the stage where, in addition to the task of assisting national statistical development, ECA is also becoming an important user of African statistics.

36. In addition to the functions indicated above there is a clear need for the preparation of statistical handbooks and other documents which contain a detailed analysis and evaluation of data relating to various fields of activity. Current projects relate to trade statistics and public sector analysis, but there is an enormous scope for the expansion of the work before a real understanding is achieved of the economic status of Africa within the world context. This, of course, is a rather long term project and may be regarded as one of the principal future functions of ECA when existing technical assistance activities have been completed.