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CO-ORDINATION OF TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION IN STATISTICS

Current issues in technical co-operation  
focusing on bilateral agencies and  
non-governmental organizations

Report prepared by the Statistical Office of the  
United Nations Secretariat

1. During 1989, the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat executed, on behalf of DTCD, 185 country and 35 inter-country projects respectively. Delivery in this field was up by US \$ 8.1 million from US \$ 21.3 million in 1988 to US \$ 29.4 millions. In terms of regional allocations Africa is the largest recipient of this technical co-operation. However, in 1989 Asia has received slightly more assistance due to two projects in China to support the population census with a total budget of \$ 7 million. Technical and interregional advisers as well as staff from the Statistical Office undertook 149 project-related or direct advisory missions to 84 countries.
2. The main objective of technical co-operation is to assist developing countries to strengthen their capabilities in collecting, processing, and disseminating a broad range of development related statistics. Assistance was provided in general statistical organization and in areas such as economic statistics, national accounts, social and demographic statistics, statistics on women and special population groups, national household surveys, and statistical data processing and informatics. There was a significant increase in 1989 in work related to the 1990 round of population and housing censuses, while other aspects of technical co-operation in statistics also increased or continued at the same level.
3. Technical co-operation is increasing rapidly in the field of statistical data processing as developing countries become aware of the advantage of computers and packages in processing, compiling and tabulating as well as in analyzing statistical data. Out of the total of 185 country projects being executed in the field of statistics in 1989, 152 had a data processing component.
4. The technical co-operation programme in statistics receives support from UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, the regular budget of the United Nations and bilateral donors. Close collaboration is always maintained with all multilateral and bilateral agencies. However the United Nations Statistical Office is in general only marginally involved in direct technical backstopping of bilaterally funded projects unless such assistance is channelled through an international agency like UNFPA or UNDP. A few example of co-operation between multilateral and bilateral sources of technical co-operation in the field of statistics are described below:
  - i) The Statistical Office regularly attends the sessions of the Interagency Census Coordination Committee. The Committee was established in 1986 to coordinate funding for censuses in sub-Saharan Africa. The Committee has expanded over the last four years in

both number of membership and in scope of the subject matter covered. Members (USAID, the World Bank, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Statistical Office/DTCDC and the US Census Bureau) of the Committee recommended that the Committee should build up a network of contacts in the international donor community to broaden the base for both funding and coordination. The need for enhanced co-ordination in census activities at country level has become increasingly apparent. A meeting of the Interagency Census Coordination Committee is being convened to coincide with the UNDP Governing Council meeting in Geneva in May-June 1990.

ii) Important support continues to be given through UNFPA funded project for population census training in sub-Saharan Africa with bilateral support from the Government of Canada. National and sub-regional courses offered under this project are organized by ECA while Statistics Canada is providing courses in Canada.

iii) A technical adviser in statistics on women in development, funded by the Government of Norway through the UNDTCD, is now in the Statistical Office. The adviser is working with other advisers in technical co-operation and specialists in related fields in the Statistical Office to improve national capabilities in the development and dissemination of statistics on women in the context of the overall development of national statistical collection programmes and services. Such statistics are needed by countries to assess and monitor the situation of women and to develop policies and programmes for the full participation of women in development.

iv) There are two Associate Experts at Headquarters funded by the Italian Government through UNDTCD. They assist in the work of the technical advisers and regular staff related to the implementation of the technical co-operation programme in statistics. It is a very successful programme in which the Associate Experts have significantly contributed to our programme and we believe they have acquired extensive experience.

v) The National Household Survey Capability

Programme (NHSCP) endeavors to promote an array of arrangements for co-ordination amongst multilateral and bilateral organizations in funding and execution of projects on integrated household survey programmes. On receipt of a request, an interagency mission is organized to help the country concerned in formulating an integrated household survey programme. Where so indicated, projects proposals are also drafted, identifying various survey components as well as the local inputs and the resource constraint for which external support is to be sought. These documents are used by the countries in seeking donor support. The draft project could end up being funded by a single multilateral or bilateral donor or could be supported, in parts, by a number of agencies. In the case of single donors, the Central Co-ordinating Unit (CCU) of NHSCP and the regional commissions concerned as well as interested specialized agencies do periodically review implementation of the programme and when a UN agency is the source of funding support, UN/DTCD is more likely to be the executing agency. Where programmes are supported by a combination of multilateral and bilateral agencies, the coordinating function of NHSCP at the country level becomes all the more important specially where bilateral agencies retain the responsibility for execution of their own component. Another possibility is of bilateral funding through trust fund arrangement with execution being undertaken by multilateral agency - usually, in this field UN\DTCD.

vi) There are several bilateral and multi-bilateral technical co-operation programmes in the developing countries for the development of population and related statistics. For example, the Netherlands Government has agreed to provide technical assistance and contribution for the local costs for the 1991 Population Census of Bangladesh; the Swedish Government has agreed to provide technical assistance for the 1992 Census of Zimbabwe; while the Japanese Government has been providing technical assistance and data processing equipment for developing population data base in Sri Lanka. The Government of the United States has provided data processing equipment and technical assistance under bilateral agreement for the 1986/1987 Population Census in Somalia while Italian Government has provided various types of equipment and materials under multi-bilateral funding arrangement. In all these instances UNFPA is the major contributor with

UN/DTCD as executing agency and the UN Statistical Office as the major source of technical support. In such projects, DTCD/Statistical Office have often assumed the co-ordinating role in the implementation of different sources of project inputs.

5. A major issue in technical co-operation is the importance of co-ordination at country level. This issue was specifically mentioned by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-fifth session. Ideally, the national statistical office should play a determining role in such a co-ordination effort, and in some countries the ideal is achieved. However in many developing countries this is not so. Co-ordination is inadequate where statistics are highly decentralized, or where a centralized statistical service is relatively weak, where the overall governmental administrative services are weak, or where the country has limited experience in receiving technical co-operation from multiple donors. Concerted effort should be made by donors and executing agencies providing technical assistance in statistics to improve in such countries the co-ordination mechanisms and modalities of execution. At project formulation, at the beginning of project implementation and during its execution, the UN Statistical Office endeavor to play a leading role in promoting such co-ordination in meetings and consultations with others international organizations and bilateral agencies.

