

CURRENT ISSUES IN TECHNICAL COOPERATION

Prepared by the World Bank

I. Introduction

1. At previous sessions of the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities the Bank has reported on technical cooperation activities covering both general statistical fields and the specialized area of external debt statistics. The Bank continues to provide support to member countries through funding statistical projects, technical missions, and through dissemination of appropriate studies of country practices.

① 2. In the recent past the Bank has focussed its attention on two main issues. The first concerns the reinforcement of efforts designed to up-grade skills of national professionals in the context of the Social Dimension of Adjustment project. The second concerns the evaluation of general statistical capabilities, the constraints faced by member countries, identification of priorities, and suggestions on how national governments and the international donor community can best aid capacity building in member countries. ②

3. In pursuit of these goals the Bank has published two papers which are annexed to this report. The first, The SDA Regional Training Program, describes the actions that are being taken to support the program's objectives and its sustainability beyond the immediate life span of the national projects under the SDA. The second paper on Information Systems and Basic Statistics in Sub-Saharan Africa maps out strategies for both national and international agencies to help develop viable information systems in countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. ① ②

2. Regional Training under the SDA

4. The main subject-matter areas on which the program is focussing are: policy analysis, planning of social policies and programs, and data collection, management and exploratory analysis. The approach that the SDA is following in the development of its program is, as far as possible, to build onto and support existing training programs. The development of the program is conceived of as having two major components: the development of technical modules, and the establishment of appropriate delivery systems that will be used to deliver the modules. The modules will largely be based on the technical instruments and programs that are being developed by the SDA regional unit in Washington D.C. The strategy adopted by the SDA Unit is to base its regional training activities in Africa with the view that training will ultimately be delivered by African training institutions. However, in a preliminary phase of module development, twinning operations between donors' training centers and African sub-regional training centers will be arranged.

5. The SDA regional training program was presented and discussed during the course of 1989 and the major activity has been the definition of the key components of the program and of how it should be executed.

6. The broad guidelines for the program were established during the second meeting of the SDA training Task Force which was hosted by the Munich Centre for Advanced Statistical Training in October 1989. The main document describing the program was produced in November 1989.

7. In the field of statistical training the main focus over the forthcoming 12 months will be to operationalize the training program. This will be done following a "building block" approach. Each block constitutes an arrangement with a specific institution to develop a particular module or set of modules. Close contact is being maintained with the following institutions, the Centre europeen de formation des statisticiens economistes des pays de developpement (CESD), Statistics Canada, the Munich Centre for Advanced Statistics Training, and the International Statistical Programs Centre (IESPC)

3. General Strengthening of Statistical Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa

8. A new development strategy for information systems is presented, with emphasis on the establishment of clear priorities for developing information flows at the country level matched by increased resource allocations. Four broad data fields requiring action are stressed: social and demographic, natural resources and the environment, price and production statistics, and national accounts. The paper outlines efforts at the national and international level which will be required for rehabilitating and building statistical systems. The establishment of a minimum set of statistical priorities and a national action program for the development of information systems, and investment in statistical infrastructure are required at the national level. Improved coordination among donors in the delivery of assistance is recognized as an important ingredient in the strategy.

9. The Sub-Committee is invited to note that three country case studies will be conducted over the next several months to identify how best the recommendations in the paper can be transformed into actionable programs at the country level. The programs to be developed will take into account country situations, their needs for data, and identify external technical cooperation inputs that will be required. It is hoped that these case studies will provide a basis for the design of future technical cooperation projects. The Bank will share findings from these studies with other interested multi-lateral and bilateral donor agencies and in this manner contribute towards improved delivery of technical assistance.