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**Gender Research Using the *Demographic Yearbook***

**By**

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## A. Introduction

1. As the main source for official national statistics on a variety of topics, primarily from censuses and vital records, the *Demographic Yearbook* is a valuable resource for government departments and research institutes focusing on global demographic and social change. Its value as a research tool is somewhat more limited for researchers who focus on specific substantive topics such as gender inequality or migration (as I do) or many other subjects. These researchers generally prefer micro data files, which are increasingly available. When using aggregate statistics such as those in the *Demographic Yearbook*, they tend to want: (a) timely data; (b) data which are disaggregated in much greater detail than currently available in either print or electronic form; and (c) comparability in concepts, definitions, data presentation, etc., which is not widely available in the *Demographic Yearbook*.

2. In this paper these general research requirements are illustrated by noting specific data needs for gender research, in particular gender statistics on work and economic activity. This review was undertaken with a view toward assessing whether and how current research needs for information about the economic activity of women are satisfied with data generated by the *Demographic Yearbook* system. Such an assessment necessarily includes a review of the constraints of data availability, data quality and practicality, and particularly, the limited resources of countries and of the United Nations Statistics Division. Questions include: (a) Are current user needs for economic statistics by sex different from those the data systems were created to answer? (b) Do they permit an assessment of global and regional change? (c) What, if anything, needs to be done to maximize use of, and expand access to, the information in print and electronic form?

3. Since 1980 the United Nations Statistics Division and numerous demographic statistical organizations at the international level have developed and/or modified data collection and analysis systems to shed new light on the situation of women. Staff and consultants of the Demographic and Social Statistics Branch produced reports and publications, which represented major innovations in the field (United Nations, 1984 a and b; 1988; 1990; 1995; 2000). In particular, attention has focused on women's access to economic resources, including their integration in the labour force. Large amounts of data became available each decade and significant analyses were completed with a view toward a) addressing theoretical and empirical research issues and b) informing policy and program decisions by governments and other organizations.

4. The *Demographic Yearbook* contains available official statistics, in aggregate form, as reported by national authorities in response to annual questionnaires sent by the United Nations Statistics Division to each of 229 countries or areas (1999). The statistics cover a variety of topics and are collected primarily from censuses and vital records, with some updates and estimates from other sources. Some statistics, such as population by age and sex, are reported annually, others, such as economic activity, are reported periodically. It is, as noted in the

introduction to the 1996 Yearbook, “.....designed to provide basic statistical data for demographers, economists, public health workers and sociologists.” (p.2). Therefore, although their level of technical knowledge varies, users are presumed to be relatively sophisticated with respect to data sources and quality issues. This presumption needs to be re-evaluated in view of the increased number of users and the increased complexity of the questions they seek to address. Users were advised, in that same 1996 *Yearbook*, that a “...Demographic and Social Statistics Database” which runs on microcomputers was under development and would aid them in conducting their own research. It is not yet available to users outside the United Nations.

5. While much will be gained in the long run from current efforts to improve concepts, definitions and data collection and dissemination processes, some changes can be made in the short run with existing statistics. In recent editions of the *Demographic Yearbook* and the *Yearbook of Labour Statistics*, produced by the International Labour Office, 184 countries and territories report at least some statistical information on their economically active populations obtained from censuses carried out since 1945. This review notes some of the problems with statistics on women’s economic activity resulting from current variable concepts and methods. It focuses also, however, on the compilation, tabulation and integration of these data in the *Demographic Yearbook* with a view toward seeing whether changes in the coverage and detail of the tabulations of existing data might make them more valuable to a larger number of users.

6. The discussion that follows is based on reviews of: (a) several volumes of the *Demographic Yearbook*, especially those for 1992, 1994, 1996, and 1999.; (b) The Historical Supplement to the DYB, 1948-97 on CD; (c) tables which can be produced from the *Demographic Yearbook* database in its current form, and (d) questionnaires sent to countries annually and during their census years. Use of *Demographic Yearbook* statistics in three editions of *The World’s Women* was also reviewed but is not discussed here.

## **B. Relevance of the *Demographic Yearbook* for current research on gender statistics**

7. Users. Most national and international statistical agencies have responded to the prodding of users and the mandates of international conferences concerned with gender issues such as that which appears in the Platform of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 (United Nations, 2000, p.177). Numerous regional commissions and individual countries also have plans for further development of gender statistics. Progress has been deliberate and slow over the years, but gained momentum since 1995 as increasing numbers of users have requested, if not demanded, data which not only describe the situation of women at a given time, but also describe changes over time.

8. Measuring change over time and across nations is much more important today than it was when indicators and methods to describe the situation of women were initially developed. Users now seek to measure the impact of particular policies and programs over time, to assess government commitment to the goals they set and to identify future needs for gender statistics. For example, early efforts to insure the disaggregation of labour force, income and occupation

statistics by sex have evolved into demands for improved statistics on particular categories of the economically active such as informal workers and home based workers. Users making such demands or requests are frequently unsophisticated about issues of adequacy, reliability and comparability of existing statistics, however. For example, users seeking additional data on workers in the informal sector or home based workers often do so because they believe (correctly) that the existing data on the formal economy do not adequately measure women's work. They may be unaware of the extent to which methodological and conceptual differences with respect to definitions of economic activity, employment and unemployment limit comparison of subgroups even in the formal sector and that the data are completely inadequate to describe the informal sector. Users are also frequently ignorant of data collection methods and of differences between censuses, surveys and case studies.

9. This raises several questions for the Demographic Statistics Section as it undertakes a review of the *Demographic Yearbook* and its database. Broadly stated: "Is what is produced in the *Demographic Yearbook* (and the database) still relevant in terms of current user needs for gender statistics?" An important consideration is whether some changes can be made to make the *Demographic Yearbook* a more valuable source of gender statistics and yet maintain the consistency of data series. For example, for users looking for official data on the age/sex composition of the population or the most recent birth rates for specific countries, the *Demographic Yearbook* is probably the best source. There are no estimates or imputations, many blank spaces and qualifying footnotes in the tables, but the numbers that are presented are the latest official government figures. Official government figures from censuses are not always useful for cross-national comparisons, however, because of differences in concepts and definition. Statistics on economic activity and labour force status are a case in point. Nations use different definitions and different reference periods to measure them, and publish some or all of the data collected in tabulations that may or may not be comparable. Moreover, efforts to make data more available and valuable to larger numbers of users is a specific instance of a much broader concern. That is, to what extent is it possible to link demographic and social statistics obtained from different sources, i.e., censuses, surveys and administrative records such as vital statistics systems, the usual sources of such statistics? At present there is not much coordination among the various agencies collecting such data and, hence, no real answer as to whether linkages are possible and/or useful within nations or across nations.

10. Data Series. The data series in the *Demographic Yearbook* are presented in two parts. Basic demographic data tables in the first part present a limited range of key statistics on population size, age, sex, urban/rural residence, natality, mortality, marriages and divorces. The basic tables provide a summary of demographic statistics as well as some trends for a given period. For example, live births and crude birth rates by urban/rural residence are shown for each year between 1992 and 1996 in the 1996 *Demographic Yearbook*. Births by age of mother and sex of child, on the other hand, are available only for the most recent year reported. Part two of the *Yearbook* covers a special topic with some depth. In 1996, the special topic was mortality and included foetal mortality and tables on perinatal, infant and maternal mortality. In other years, special topics have included economic characteristics (1994) and household composition (1995) derived from responses by national statistical offices to the census questionnaires on economic characteristics and household characteristics sent during their census years. These

latter topics present episodic data which depend on the year the census was taken in each country, the date by which the questionnaires are returned to the Statistics Division, and, when a significant number of country responses are in hand, and the availability of Statistics Division staff to clean and process the data. That is, the data are incorporated into both the *Yearbook* and the database in an ongoing process and corrected as each nation returns corrected or adjusted national data. As a result, the figures vary from year to year.

11. It bears repeating to users that the data in both part one and part two of the *Yearbook* are routinely collected by the Statistical Division from the national statistical offices, and are derived from information each nation actually collects, not from any request that countries collect additional information. For example, while the census questionnaire on Economic Activity notes that the tabulations requested are in agreement with the *Principles and Recommendations for the 1970 Population Censuses* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E67.XVII.3 and soon the more recent 1998 recommendations), the individual countries return what they have, sometimes classified or defined as requested in the tables and sometimes not. Changes in column headings or stubs are made by each country as needed. This limits what can be done with these data. Moreover, coverage of economic activity in population censuses is usually limited to 5-7 questions, or about 20 per cent of the questions included in a good labour force survey. This restricts the level of detail on economic activity that can be presented. Some argue it also affects the accuracy of the statistics as participants in the informal economy, home based workers and others, mainly women, are frequently omitted. Countries cannot be told what to collect, but, given what they do collect, (a) is it possible to present the data in a more useful way; and (b) would the data be more useful if additional or other questions were included in the *Economic Characteristics Questionnaire*? Some answers to these questions are suggested in the following sections of this paper.

12. In addition to the extent of variation in definitions, another problem for researchers using existing economic data series concerns the variable number of countries reporting various items. For example the definition of economically active may be based on responses referring to a day, a week, a month or a year reference period. The economically active may then be reported by occupation for 70 countries and by status in employment for 56 countries. It may be necessary to explicitly address the limits to which a “global” situation is described in tabulations from 70 countries with variable definitions of the economically active. These concerns will be addressed in more detail in the next sections.

### **C. Availability, timeliness and scope of data in the *Demographic Yearbook* and *The World's Women***

13. The *Demographic Yearbook* has been available annually since 1948 with the single exception that the 1949 and 1950 editions were combined. The basic demographic tables in part one of the *Yearbook* generally provide accurate data and certainly the “official” data for each country. In terms of response time, the country responses are available in a timely fashion, generally about two years after the reference date of the *Yearbook* (the date when the annual questionnaires are sent). Unfortunately, even though some national updates are incorporated,

many tables returned by the countries include census data that are more than 10 years old. Nonetheless, they probably provide the best available source for detailed breakdowns by age and sex for certain types of gender specific studies of, for example, differential mortality by age, trends in the size of the elderly, youth, and the age group of the economically active population. Not all data are available for every country, of course, and the scope is restricted to what is available in census and vital records with whatever updates each country provides. Additional statistics by country are available in the database. As these are aggregate data, even in the database, they cannot be reconfigured in any greater detail by the user.

#### **D. Statistics on Work and Economic Activity**

14. General conceptual and methodological issues: Statistics describing the economic characteristics of the population derived from most censuses and reported in countries' responses to the *Demographic Yearbook* census questionnaires are based on concepts defined and recommended by the International Labour Organization (1988; 2001) and by the United Nations Statistics Division, *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* (1980; 1998). The tables presented in most census publications, and hence in the *Demographic Yearbook*, focus on the economically active population, defined most recently as ".....all persons of either sex who provide or are available to provide the supply of labour for the production of economic goods and services, as defined by the System of National Accounts, during a specified time reference period" (United Nations, 1998, p.78). Many countries still use the full or short versions of earlier definitions developed in 1966 and modified in 1982. They all emphasize the production of economic goods and services. This sounds reasonable, but, in practice, there is considerable variation among countries in what is considered economic goods and services and in the reference period used.

15. The economically active population as defined by ILO is a somewhat flexible concept designed to meet the needs of individual countries in developing their systems of national accounts. Consequently, countries measure it differently, although many incorporate one of the two definitions suggested in the ILO recommendations (ILO, 2001; Hussmans, et al, 1990). The first definition measures the usually active population in relation to a long reference period such as a year. This is particularly useful in countries where there is a large concentration in agriculture and where seasonal employment is the norm. It also includes more women, whose activity is likely to be intermittent, to a greater extent than that of men. There are disadvantages, however, notably problems of recall and the inclusion of relatively minor economic activities. The second definition identifies the currently active, or the labour force, in terms of a shorter reference period such as a week or a day. Some countries also use month. This reduces recall errors and simplifies questionnaire construction, but may miss seasonal employment. It is the one generally recommended for international comparison, however (United Nations, 1998, p.79). ILO has noted "Of the 187 countries which reported to the United Nations on censuses in the 1975-84 period, 146 used a current period (day of the census, last week or month) and 47 used the last year as the reference period for a usual measure. Some had questions using both periods." (ILO, 2001, p.12). Cross-national comparisons are difficult under such circumstances.

16. National practices used to collect labour statistics in the 115 countries conducting censuses between 1989 and 1994 were documented by the ILO in order to evaluate whether and to what extent such comparisons were possible (ILO, 1996). The lack of comparability even within regions is evident. For example, in the 1991 census, Argentina used the week preceding the census date to describe employment and the four weeks preceding the census to describe unemployment. Brazil, on the other hand, used one year (September 1, 1990 to August 31, 1991) as its reference period in the 1991 census and defined both employed and unemployed in terms of the reference year (ILO, 1996, pp. 4 & 13). Moreover, there is a serious question as to the accuracy and reliability of unemployment data collected in a census, where probing is less likely than in a survey. As a result employment and unemployment statistics have not been published in the *Demographic Yearbook* even though they are collected in the census questionnaires and are in the database.

17. With respect to gender statistics on work, censuses are generally useful for monitoring change over time in limited aspects of economic activity within a country, but less useful for comparisons among countries, precisely because of variations in definitions such as the reference period for employment. Also, international compilations of census data are most useful when comparable concepts and tabulations are presented for about the same date (year). Of necessity, the *Demographic Yearbook* presents data for the year in which the census was taken in each country and for topics such as “economically active” as defined by each country.

18. In recent years, many countries improved the quality of their economic statistics with more detailed tabulations by sex, clear specification of the reference period, and a move toward using recommended concepts and definitions. Other problems derived from sex-based stereotypes and biases have also been addressed, but are more difficult to correct. For example, if it is assumed that all women are homemakers and not economically active, the agricultural food production done by rural women will not be viewed or reported as work, even if the food produced makes up most of the families’ diets. A large body of work by ILO and the Statistics Division has noted these biases and made recommendations aimed at improving concepts and methods used in censuses and surveys (United Nations, 1998; ILO, 2001,). A detailed evaluation of what types of comparisons can be made from what is reported by individual countries in response to the *Demographic Yearbook* questionnaires has yet to be undertaken.

19. The *Demographic Yearbook* and its database: Even though there remains much variation in concepts and methods used by countries, a significant amount of information is or will be available on the economic status of women in the 1990 and 2000 round of censuses and, for some countries, for as long as four or five decades. For example, Table B-17, “Population by Type of Activity, Age and Sex” is available for Bangladesh for 1971 and 1981 and for Austria for each decade between 1951 and 1991 in the *Demographic Yearbook* database. By 2005, it should be possible to provide some analytical tables for those countries with two or more periods of comparable data to show changes in the potential labour force, the economically active, women and other subgroups in the total population. Comparisons of selected aspects of the status of women might be made among countries with comparable data that have been grouped by characteristics other than region. They might be grouped, for example, by whether they have



growing, stagnating or declining proportions of the population who are economically active. Such analyses might encourage more countries to collect data as recommended.

20. A major concern with respect to women's economic activity focuses on the undercount of women's participation because the concepts and methods used by most nations fairly accurately describe the formal sector, but not the informal sector where many women are employed. It is possible to provide additional tabulation of participation rates that indicate whether there is undercounting in the data collected by including characteristics in the tabulations that are known to suggest an undercount. These tabulations would include greater detail on status in employment especially among the economically active. For example, in the census questionnaire on economic characteristics sent to all countries, Table 1 requests "Population by Type of Activity, Age and Sex". Only the statistics on the economically active are presented in the *Demographic Yearbook*. Table 26 in the 1994 edition presented these numbers for 98 countries pretty much as they appear on the returned questionnaires except to add a column on the percent of the total in each age group who are economically active, one of the few percentages shown. The data on employment and unemployment are not used because of problems noted elsewhere, and the "not economically active" are shown in Table 27 with statistics on their functional categories from Table 2 of the questionnaire sent to countries.

21. In view of the fact that the reference period for economic activity used by each country is known, why not incorporate it into the data base and show the economically active in two parts: the currently active (based on week or month) and the usually active (based on year) and show the percent of the population who are economically active in countries using each category. It is generally accepted that the usually active includes more women. Since some countries collect data using both categories, one might do a small evaluation of the extent to which women are undercounted by comparing the currently active category with the usually active in these countries. This additional tabulation could be shown only in the database.

22. The additional tabulation suggested above would also permit the use of statistics on the "employed" and "unemployed" for illustrative analytical purposes with data from countries that collect relatively accurate statistics. If statistics reported by countries are generally accepted as official national figures, why not include employment and unemployment in the public use database if not the *Demographic Yearbook*. Appropriate caveats concerning comparability and accuracy could also be included. Showing the employed as a percent of the currently active or of the usually active would increase the accuracy of the statistics by gender. Adding the reference period to the database (either through a redesigned questionnaire or incorporated from information on the census schedules of individual countries) would permit a clear distinction between the economically active and the labour force. Both concepts are useful for different purposes. Users interested in employment and unemployment statistics could then use the database for research on selected countries with good data and comparable concepts and definitions.

23. It is also generally recognized that participation in informal activities, which are widely undercounted, occurs mainly in agriculture and in small scale manufacturing, service and trading activities (for both women and men). The *Demographic Yearbook* collects and publishes

tabulations of the economically active population by industry. Additional breakdowns particularly of the agricultural, manufacturing and services sectors by the more detailed activity status noted above (currently and usually active) might permit a preliminary assessment of the participation of women and men in those industries known to include a relatively large amount of informal activity. For complex tabulations of industry by other relevant characteristics, it would be necessary to ask the countries for additional tabulations, but only of data they have, such as a cross-tabulation of industry with status in employment or occupation. The questionnaire on economic characteristics should be reviewed and some modifications made before the next round of censuses. In particular, the information requested should be in the form of the 1998 recommendations.

24. In the *Demographic Yearbook* database tables on activity rates by age and sex, the age groups differ, particularly at the youngest and oldest ages. The final figures for activity rates from the 1990 round of censuses shown in the database also include some curious differences in the number of age categories, detailing six categories for the United States in 1990 and fifteen categories for Ukraine in 1989. This may simply reflect that further cleaning of the data is required. It suggests, however, that the production of a complete database is a major undertaking requiring considerable preparatory work and the availability of several clerks. Once produced, it will also require a great deal of effort to support the database, especially if there are large numbers of external users. This will vary, of course, depending on whether the final product is a full database (as suggested in the *Demographic Yearbook* description) or a series of extracts similar to the Historical Supplement currently available on CD. For comparative research, the full database is preferable.

25. A further difficulty with the *Demographic Yearbook* data on economic activity noted earlier, concerns the different number of countries in each table describing economic activity by selected variables. For example, in the 1994 *Demographic Yearbook*, Table 26, "Economic Activity by Age and Sex and Urban/Rural Residence", for each census between 1985 and 1994, includes data for 98 countries for age and sex and 24 countries for urban/rural residence. Table 30, "The Economically Active Population by Status in Employment, 1985-94", includes data for only 56 countries and by Urban/Rural residence for only 11 countries. Two minor changes would be helpful to the user: a) note the total number of countries in each table rather than in the technical notes describing each table which appear at the beginning of the book; and b) note explicitly that the 98 (or 56) countries do not represent all countries. The inclusion of analytical tables, as suggested above, should also indicate how many and which countries provide data. Knowing the number of responses is even more necessary for users of the database. In addition, for researchers interested in comparative research, the lack of percentage distributions in the *Demographic Yearbook* economic tables is probably the most frustrating aspect of using it. If one wanted to compare self-employed workers over time or across countries, it would be necessary to compute the percentage economically active who were own account workers by sex for each country, as Table 30 in the 1994 Yearbook contains only raw numbers. This would probably send most users in search of an alternate source.

26. In order to understand gender differences in economic activity, it is necessary to have good data describing the characteristics of workers by gender. Because women and men are

concentrated in different jobs in many countries, occupation is a key characteristic. A table describing the Economically Active by Age, Sex and Occupation is included in the 1994 *Demographic Yearbook*, and provides data for 70 countries and by urban/rural residence for 11 countries. It is also available in the current database. Thus, some occupational data are included in censuses and reported, but for only about one third of the countries or areas to which *Demographic Yearbook* questionnaires are sent. This limits their usefulness for describing global change.

27. The use of these tabulations on occupation is further limited by the level of the occupational classification scheme by which the data are tabulated or presented. The occupational classifications used in many national censuses (and surveys) are designed to be consistent with the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) or to allow for comparability with it, at least at the most general level. As a result, for countries with census data on occupations, the raw data are frequently somewhat comparable only at the most general level. In comparisons of women and men using *Demographic Yearbook* statistics, however, a problem arises precisely because data on occupation are presented at the most general level – 10 major groups. At this level of aggregation, the differences within groups are too large to be useful for comparative analysis of gender differences.

28. The current ISCO classification, ISCO-88, is a hierarchical classification with four levels. In each level, occupations are organized by the skills needed for the occupation (ILO, 1990). As noted, Level I includes only 10 major occupational groups. The second level has 28 sub-major groups; the third has 116 minor groups and the most detailed level has 390 occupational groups. The classification level requested in the questionnaire sent to countries and shown in Table 29 in the 1994 *Demographic Yearbook* and in the database is the least detailed level and one which hides differences between women and men. Among professionals, for example, women still tend to be concentrated in relatively few occupations, e.g. teaching and nursing (Anker, 1998). In order to reveal the extent of gender differences, the most detailed level of classification needs to be used, especially when occupation statistics are used as a proxy for socioeconomic status (Powers and Holmberg, 1978; Boyd and McRoberts, 1982). Even then some detailed occupational groups, such as sales occupations, may mask segregation between men and women. In order to make the existing *Demographic Yearbook* database statistics on occupation by gender more accurate and useful, staff might examine the possibility of requesting a more detailed occupational breakdown for the database. This would not be difficult once the data are transferred electronically. The existing table, or one at the sub-major group level, could still be published, noting some of its limitations.

29. Given the limited number of countries providing detailed and comparable data on economic activity, it might be worth considering the preparation of a separate publication (or a modified part two of the *Demographic Yearbook*) to illustrate the types of analyses that can be done for countries which provide data as requested. It is also worth considering whether a few additional questions might be asked in the questionnaire on economic characteristics, which would link education and occupation, industry and occupation or occupation by status in employment, for example.

30. More information could be available as all the data collected at the individual level are not necessarily tabulated and disseminated. Many countries still need to be convinced that sex should be the predominant variable in any tables produced. Disaggregation by sex should be provided in all printed material, databases and public use files. The *Demographic Yearbook* Census Questionnaire on Economic Characteristics currently asks for all tables by age and sex except for Table 8 which requests type of activity by age and marital status only for women. This should be reviewed, as nations already tend to suppress cross-classifications by sex when they present more complex tables with multiple variables, e.g., occupation by marital status, occupation by education, etc. Requests for data for international comparisons might lead to less suppression. As there is good evidence to suggest that stereotypic biases affect the adequacy of statistics on the economic roles of women and on the household and family roles of men, Table 8 (and any other complex tables requested) should be requested for both men and women. Such tabulation is among the recommendations in Revision I of *Principles and Recommendations and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* (United Nations, 1998) as Table 6.1 (p.180).

#### **E. Recommendations to improve data collection and presentation**

31. Some recommendations have been included in the above text. The following recommendations are presented for discussion with a view toward making the *Demographic Yearbook* and database more user friendly to a wider range of users, particularly researchers concerned with gender issues.

##### **The *Demographic Yearbook***

(a) Revise the introduction to the annual volumes to clearly indicate to the user the nature of the data included in the annual volume. This should specify that (i) the data are primarily from the responses of national statistical organizations to the annual questionnaire sent by United Nations Statistics Division and, as such, are official national statistics; (ii) these most recent official statistics may have been updated in a variety of ways as specified in the Technical Notes; (iii) as a result, the numbers are not static and will vary from year to year as countries update their numbers, and (iv) as not all countries respond to each question, the number of countries responding are shown on each table. The introduction should probably also note that, in order to minimize the reporting burden for countries, the data files are shared with various United Nations offices and agencies and may appear in the demographic and substantive analyses of these organizations, sometimes after further updating or adjustment.

(b) Include a copy of the general questionnaire sent to all countries and, where appropriate, the questionnaires used for periodic analyses of economic, household or education data obtained for census years and occasionally included in the second part of the *Demographic Yearbook*.

(c) Include a chart or table showing when the annual questionnaire is sent out, when a given number of responses are likely to be in, the cut off date for publication in the *Yearbook*, and the likely number of responses after the cut-off date which will appear in the next edition. Users who do not work in statistical offices often do not appreciate how the process of collecting and disseminating statistics works.

(d) Note specifically that the *Demographic Yearbook* and the database include aggregate data as reported by the country, not individual level data. As such they are very useful for certain types of comparisons over time and among countries, essentially ecological analyses, but cannot be used as a micro data file might be.

(e) Produce and include a synoptic table for each year which lists the countries responding, the reference year for data reported and whether each of the basic items are included in the country response. Separate tables might be needed for census data and for vital records data. An example of such tables are those included in the ILO *Sources and Methods....* volumes (ILO, 1996, ix-xi).

(f) Include percentage distributions in all tables in the *Demographic Yearbook*, even if that means collapsing some categories or suppressing numbers. Also, consider requesting some summary measures from the countries, e.g. median age of various subgroups.

### **The *Demographic Yearbook* database**

(a) Clearly specify that this file is not yet available to the public, though a cleaned version is proposed for public use by 2004. The staff has access to the current version, but the programmers working on the “public use” version are also working on other projects; the reader of the 1996 *Demographic Yearbook* would reasonably have expected the database to be available within the year and certainly before 2004. A similar suggestion applies to any new extracts from the database that might be proposed.

(b) Provide the user of the database or extracts from the database (such as the historical supplement) with some background information and clear, simple instructions in print form accompanying the disk. The WISTAT, Version 4 Database CD includes such a booklet in the case with the CD. Another good example of such user-friendly instructions is the format used by the U.S. Bureau of the Census to disseminate the American Community Survey CD. A small, clearly written booklet accompanies the CD inside a cardboard folder, CD on one side, and booklet on the other with information also printed on the folder.

40. In conclusion, it is important to note that this type of assessment needs to be done for other specific substantive uses of the *Demographic Yearbook* such as research on migration as well as on the broader uses for comparisons of population size, composition and change. This presupposes a considerable increase in the time of professional and clerical personnel devoted to the *Demographic Yearbook*.

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