Use of micro-computers in statistical work

Reported by ECA

The ECA Statistics Division does not currently have any micro-computer equipment purchased under regular budget arrangements. In the course of the last 3 years, it was however possible to acquire, through extra-budgetary sources, a range of machines, such as the HP-150 under the UNFPA-financed project «Regional Advisory Service in Demographic Statistics», two Toshiba-laptops T1100 PLUS under a UNDP-financed project entitled «Assistance to LDCs and NICs in national accounts» and one IBM/PC-XT acquired under a project on «Provision of a Data Processing Specialist» financed by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany. The latter is linked to the ECA miniframe HP-3000.

While the HP 150 is mainly devoted to the production of mission reports and technical papers, the T1100 PLUS laptops have been used to develop national accounts tables (LOTUS-123) and for word processing. The IBM-PC/XT is partly utilized for word processing (preparation of training materials in connection with seminars and workshops on the use of microcomputers in household survey data processing) and partly for preparing economic and social indicators data as well as for graphic display using suitable software packages including MS-CHART, CHART-MASTER and FREELANCE.
In March 1988, ten Toshiba T3100/20 were acquired under the project «Inter-census Training Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa» (RAF/87/P03). They are mainly used for training at the country level, national staff involved in census data processing. The most used software packages for this purpose are RODE/PC for data entry, CONCOR for editing, CENTS for tables production and SPSS for analysis. At times this equipment is also used for preparing relevant training materials on census data processing.

During periods of low use, the Statistics Division utilizes the above-mentioned equipment for report and data processing in the context of its regular budget activities such as mailing lists, Directory of African Statisticians and analysis of survey on UN-PABAERD implementation. DBASE III PLUS, LOTUS-123 and Freelance are the most frequently used software packages by the office.

The Division expects to increase the use of micro-computers in its computing activities and to develop a project for setting up a portable data management system so as to facilitate interchange of statistical data between ECA and member countries as well as among member countries. An assessment of the ECA needs for micro-computers is to be conducted this year. It is hoped that this exercise will lead to the acquisition of micro-computers under the regular budget for use by the staff members of the Division.