

**Expert Group Meeting on
Setting the Scope of Social Statistics**
United Nations Statistics Division
in collaboration with the Siena Group on Social Statistics
New York, 6-9 May 2003

Social Statistics in Egypt *

by

Bothaina El Deeb **

* This document is being reproduced without formal editing.

** Head of Population Studies and Research Center, of CAPMAS. The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the United Nations Secretariat nor of the Institute

Social Statistics in Egypt

Bothaina El Deeb

1. Introduction

Since the beginning of 1990s, both national and international organizations clearly emphasized the importance of social development. The 2000 Millennium Summit and all international conferences held during 1990s also explicitly emphasized the great importance of social development. Sound statistics and high quality information play an important role in monitoring and evaluating the impact of different social plans.

Indeed, almost all countries have some social statistics, but they may collect these statistics in an ad hoc manner and in traditional ways without a clear strategy or programme of work. Moreover in some countries, coordination among users and producers of social statistics is still insufficient, resulting in inconsistent statistics and under utilization of data.

This paper focuses on the situation of social statistics in Egypt and the gaps in these statistics. The paper also aims at demonstrating the level of coordination between users and producers of social data. Finally, this paper will also demonstrate the needed strategies and approaches to maximize the use of social statistics with respect to planning for social development in Egypt.

2. The current status of social statistics in Egypt

Egypt has a long experience in data collection. A census is held every 10 years since 1882. Vital statistics system has existed since 1912. Fertility and family planning surveys at the national level were conducted since 1980. Moreover, in 1994, the scope of data collection in fertility and family planning surveys was enlarged to cover not only family planning and fertility data but also all reproductive health components.

Educational statistics in terms of the number of enrolled pupils in schools of all levels of education and drop-outs from each level for both sexes are available from the record system of the Ministry of Education. Enrollment rates are also available in CAPMAS by using the enrolled number of pupils divided by the population of target groups by age groups.

Health statistics are available in CAPMAS as a result of the firm coordination between Ministry of Health and CAPMAS to calculate the neo-natal, post-neonatal, infant and child mortality, in addition to all other rates of mortality for all age groups. Life tables are available in CAPMAS for all census years since 1950s for both sexes. Maternal mortality surveys were held in order to calculate the maternal mortality rates and the avoidable factors behind mother's death during pregnancy or delivery. Statistics on personnel of different health services (number of doctors and nurses per 10,000

population) and number of beds in hospitals per 10,000 population are also available in Egypt. Per-capita expenditure directed to health services has likewise been available in Egypt for a long time.

Referring to Labor force statistics, Egypt has a big sample survey of labor force statistics since the 1960s. There are four rounds every year to collect data on seasonality of work. Since the United Nation modified the definition of economically active persons in 1980 to involve workers in both formal and informal sectors, CAPMAS modified the definition of active persons. Accordingly, participation of women in labour force increased from only 11% in 1980 to 18% in 1990 and to 22% in 2001. It is well known that many women are working in the informal sector in Egypt, specially those who are working as unpaid family workers. Hence, since modifying the definition of active persons to follow the U.N definition, recorded female participation rates increased.

Child labor surveys are also undertaken in Egypt. There were two national surveys on child labor, one in 1988 and another in 2001. These surveys included a questionnaire directed to the child worker himself. Data collected in these surveys defined not only the prevalence of child labor but also the conditions of the child family members, household conditions, reasons behind dropping-out or non-enrolment in schools and directed to work rather than education. Data on workshop conditions were also collected in these two surveys. The proportion of children working in harmful work was well defined in order to enlighten policy makers and planners to the places and forms of activities where these children are working. These data were the basis for formulating some programs to improve the work conditions of children by offering some social and health services until other policies and programs could be formulated to eliminate child labor completely.

Gender statistics are available in Egypt. For a long time almost all traditional statistics have been classified by sex. But since 1997, experts in CAPMAS received training in International organizations such as ESCWA (since 1998) and UNFPA (since 1996), to recognize that the production of gender statistics requires not only that all official data be collected by sex, but also that concepts and methods used in data collection and presentation adequately reflect gender issues in the society and take into consideration all factors that can produce gender-based bias. In short, gender statistics not only provide general comparisons between women and men but also ensure that women's and men's participation and contribution in society are correctly measured and valued. CAPMAS has published two books on the situation of women namely *Women and Men: Statistical portrait* in 1998 which was updated in 2001, in addition to the development in women's situation during 1981- 2001. In these two publications, analyses concentrated on gaps against women in education, health, labor force, political and general social participation.

It is important to note that ESCWA organized some expert group meetings for participants from Arab countries including both producers and users of gender statistics to prepare the volume of women and men: Statistical Portrait in 8 Arab countries. This was an important step in familiarising all participants in the region on the status of

women in their Arab neighbor countries in addition to raising awareness and gender sensitization among all statistical staff and policy makers in these countries.

Finally, regarding disability statistics, although Egypt is collecting data on disabled persons since 1917, the proportion of disabled persons was underestimated (about 0.5% to 1.5% of total population in all census years). This is mainly due to low awareness on the part of both the households having disabled persons and the interviewers. With respect to accurate reporting on disabled persons. Households may feel that reporting on disabled persons is neither important nor useful; while Interviewers may not be aware of the importance of reporting accurate data on situation, characteristics, and abilities of disabled persons.

In order to solve this problem not only in Egypt but also in most Arab countries, ESCWA and UNFPA of New York organized a meeting in Cairo 1-12 June 2002 to discuss the problem of disability statistics in Arab countries of ESCWA. They recommended three specific questions to be included in the census questionnaire of Arab countries participating this meeting, in addition to well-organized training for the interviewers in order to achieve high quality of data on disability in all Arab countries of the region. They also recommend a strong role of media to explain the importance of reporting any disabled persons so that services for the disabled may be offered in their communities.

3. Gaps in social statistics in Egypt:

Although Egypt is considered as one of the countries having a rich statistical system, there are still some gaps in social statistics with respect to:

1- Number and characteristics of street children (children without shelters). The Childhood and Motherhood Council in Egypt always asks for data on street children in order to design some policies to collect them in any social organization to offer shelter, educational and health services. Until now, however, there is no data on them.

2- As mentioned before, the data on disability is highly inaccurate. Although there are great efforts to gain more accurate data on disabled persons from the census, a special survey for disabled persons is also needed. In the special sample surveys, extra efforts could be paid to collecting more and better data.

3- Although Egypt has a lot of statistics on gender gaps between women men, data are available only for health and education profiles. Egypt also still suffers from limited data on women's participation in the informal sector. Until now there is no precise definition of the informal sector. Moreover, statistics on violence against women in Egypt is not available and statistics on time use especially for women are very few. Statistics and indicators on environment are rare. New mechanisms or innovative data collection systems are needed to get some accurate data in these areas.

4. Collaboration between users and producers for social statistics

CAPMAS is the official organization responsible for collecting all statistics in Egypt. It maintains firm and strong relationships with all ministries, special councils and even non-governmental organizations to facilitate transferring data from and to all these organizations.

CAPMAS also responds to special requests from different national or international organizations for data. For example, CAPMAS conducted the following field studies:

- 1- Child labor in 1988 and in 2001 as a request of National Motherhood & Childhood Council.
- 2- Maternal Morality Surveys in 1992/93 and 2000/2001 as a request of Ministry of Health and funded by USAID.
- 3- Labor Market Surveys (in 1988 and 2000) to collect data on demand for labor from the employer point of view in the labor market in order to face the problems of high unemployment especially among newly graduated persons, as a request of Social Fund in Egypt.

CAPMAS reports all statistics with complete definitions, methodology used and all details of data collection in the introduction of all CAPMAS publications. Moreover, some new techniques for collecting data such as the focus groups discussions and in-depth analysis (qualitative surveys) are also used in some special studies conducted by CAPMAS.

Producer/user collaboration is seen in Egypt, with respect harmonization of concepts, definitions, methods and standards.

5. Actions needed to maximize the use of social statistics for policy makers in Egypt

As mentioned before, Egypt has a comprehensive system for collecting data on different social profiles. In addition, there is a firm collaboration between producers and users of social statistics. Nevertheless, there are still some gaps in social statistics, and funds and technical assistance are needed to achieve complete data sources of all social statistics. The needed funds and technical assistance would be directed to the following:

1- Disability statistics:

Until now there is a great shortage in data of disability by sex, age, type of disability, type of services needed. In addition to the census as a source of data, we need a special survey on disability with a big sample size to obtain, in detail, not only the prevalence of disability but also all socio-economic and health conditions around disabled persons, causes of disability, services available, who offers these services, the quality of services and so on.

2- Environment Statistics:

Environment statistics is a part of social statistics. Unfortunately, Egypt has only statistics on availability of clean water, sanitation and electricity for the household units. There are no statistics on water or air pollution. Moreover, CAPMAS has no experience on the ideal methodology to collect data on environment. Hence we need not only funds for surveys on environment but also the techniques and methodologies to collect the data on environment.

3- Evaluation Studies:

Egypt has a long experience in data collection for vital statistics (births and deaths). Some studies (field study) were held to examine completeness of vital statistics in 1974/75 and 1990 (office study). Since 1990, there were no field or office studies to check the completeness of vital statistics and specially the cause of death. Hence, we need some funds to conduct such studies.

4- Gender gaps studies:

During preparation of the documents on the situation of women and men in Egypt, researchers noticed that there are still some gaps in statistics of women regarding the following:

- Women's participation in the informal sector, their conditions and gender gaps in jobs, wages and discrimination against women.
- Women's time use: although some developing countries (e.g., Syria 1996) conducted some studies on time use among women and men which clearly showed that most of women's time is spent in unpaid work, while most of men's time is spent in paid work, Egypt has no studies in this field.
- Violence against women: Although violence against women has many faces as defined by UN, only data on the harmful practices against women (circumcision) is available in Egypt. Surveys covering other types of violence against women are also needed.