
STATISTICAL COMMISSION

FAMILY LIVING STUDIES AND COST OF LIVING STATISTICS

(Statement prepared by the International Labour Office
for consideration under Item 13 of the Provisional
Agenda)

Statement of the International Labour Office to the
United Nations Statistical Commission in regard to

A. FAMILY LIVING STUDIES

1. At the second session of the Statistical Commission reference was made to the subject of family living studies and it was suggested that the representative of the International Labour Organization prepare a statement on the subject for the Third Session of the Commission.
2. The International Labour Office has dealt with the subject of family living studies throughout its history. At the Third International Conference of Labour Statisticians held in October 1926, the subject of methods of family budget studies was placed on the agenda. The Office prepared for this Conference a report summarizing what had been done in the field of family budget studies during the previous ten years and presented materials on a number of issues for the Conference to consider. The Conference adopted a resolution dealing with statistical standards on this subject (published in the ILO Studies and Reports, Series N, No. 25, pages 116-118 and also in Methods of Family Living Studies, ILO Studies and Reports, Series N, No. 23, pages 119-121).
3. The Office commenced the publication of a series of reports in the International Labour Review summarizing the results of family living studies as made in various countries. These reports were prepared following a standard outline so as to present in easily accessible form not only the substantive results obtained in the different studies, but also to suggest, by comparison with one another and with the resolutions of 1926, where the studies fell short of or fulfilled the requirements as expressed in these resolutions and where they might be improved, and thus to furnish a stimulus towards improvement in newly undertaken studies.
4. The study of Workers' Nutrition and Social Policy published in 1936 included as appendix data on foodstuffs, family consumption and nutrition
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together with a standard classification of foodstuffs for international comparisons of consumption (ILO Studies and Reports, Series B, No. 23, pages 183-243).

5. In 1939 - 40 a revised manual on Methods of Family Living Studies was prepared utilizing, as a point of departure, the family living studies which had been published from the period between 1926 and 1938. This was published in English, French and Spanish in the ILO Studies and Reports, Series N, No. 23 (1940, 1941, 1942). This report was based upon a comparative study and analysis of family living studies which had been made by the principal countries for official purposes. The study of 1940 included a section devoted to sampling as applied in family living studies, with illustrative examples of sampling techniques actually utilized, a discussion of income and outgo with special reference to sources of income and to consumption expenditures, and a tentative classification of expenditures into the principal rubrics. The separate chapter was devoted to food consumption and nutrition studies, based largely upon Dr. E. J. Bigwood's "Guiding Principles for Studies on the Nutrition of Populations", League of Nations, Health Organization, Technical Commission on Nutrition C. H. 1401 III, Health 1939 III, 1 (Geneva 1939).

6. Accompanying and parallel to this study of methods the Office published in the International Labour Review in May and June 1939, an International Survey of Recent Family Living Studies, Part I, Income and Expenditure, Part II, Food Expenditure and Consumption Habits. These were supplemented by Part III on Families of the Unemployed published in the Review for May 1940, and Part IV, Families of Farmers and Agricultural Workers in the Review for June 1941.

7. Current figures summarizing the results of family living studies in different countries are published in the ILO Year Book of Labour Statistics. They also include analyses of family income by sources, consumption expenditure by main objects of expenditure, classified according to income per family and according to income per consumption unit, distribution of food expenditure according to the principal food groups, and average food consumption of specified foods per (standardized) consumption unit.

8. The object in making these studies of methods and results of family living enquiries, described in the preceding paragraphs, was to prepare the ground for a discussion of the subject at an International Conference of Labour Statisticians. During the war, the series of International Conferences of Labour Statisticians was interrupted. In August 1947, the Sixth International Conference of Labour Statisticians was convened in

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Montreal. The Conference adopted a resolution to the effect that the Governing Body of the Office be requested to place upon the agenda of the next Conference of Labour Statisticians the subject of family living studies:

"Resolution concerning the need for further
discussion of methods of
FAMILY LIVING STUDIES

(adopted on 12 August 1947)

"The Sixth International Conference of Labour Statisticians,

"Recognizing the need for new studies of family consumption in order to furnish up-to-date weights for cost of living index numbers as well as for other reasons, and above all in order to provide for comparisons of consumption levels with given standards of adequacy, and

"Recognizing the special need for studies of family living in less well-developed areas where such studies have not been made hitherto,

"Requests the Governing Body of the International Labour Office to place on the agenda of an early session of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians the subject of the making of family living studies, including the application of new sampling techniques to the selection of families.

"Requests the Governing Body of the International Labour Office to consider the advisability of referring the special problems of making such studies in less well-developed areas to a technical committee of specially qualified experts."

9. At its 104th Session, held in March 1948, the Governing Body authorized the convening of the Seventh Session of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians in October 1949, and placed on the agenda the topic of family living studies. The Office was also authorized to convene a Preliminary Meeting of Experts late in 1948 or early in 1949 to discuss the scope of the agenda; and in particular the meeting will be asked to consider the possibility of setting up a special technical committee to deal with the problems of making such studies in less well-developed areas.

10. In order to obtain information upon recent activities in the field of family living studies, i.e., since the 1940 report, the Office sent out in December 1947, a questionnaire to the different Governments enquiring as to their work in this field since 1938 and to their plans for further studies. In particular, in view of the special interest of the Sub-Commission on Statistical Sampling in the problem of sampling applied to Family Living Studies, a special enquiry was instituted devoted
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to this point. The materials received are being analyzed and will be made available at a later date. A supplementary oral statement will be made by the representative of the International Labour Organization to the Statistical Commission.

11. It should be mentioned that at the Preliminary Meeting of Experts and at the Seventh Session of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians, the usual invitations will be issued to the United Nations to designate representatives to attend. Representatives of the specialized agencies will also be invited to the Conference.

Statement of the International Labour Office to the
United Nations Statistical Commission in regard to

B. COST OF LIVING STATISTICS

1. The International Labour Office presented to the Second International Conference of Labour Statisticians a detailed report on Cost of Living Index Number Methods for the consideration of the Conference, which adopted a series of resolutions on the subject in April 1925 (Methods of Computing Cost of Living Index Numbers, ILO, Studies and Reports, Series N, No. 6 (Geneva 1925)); for the resolutions, see, The International Standardization of Labour Statistics, Studies and Reports, Series N, No. 25, pages 98-100).
2. The subject of cost of living statistics was placed on the agenda of the Sixth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, meeting in Montreal, August 1947. The Conference adopted a series of resolutions on cost of living. One of these embodied international standards of statistics in this field. (See, International Labour Office, International Standards for Statistics of Employment, Unemployment and the Labour Force, Cost of Living and Industrial Injuries, adopted by The Sixth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Montreal, August 1947).
3. Among other resolutions were a number which recommended that the Governing Body of the International Labour Office authorize the Office to make special studies on specific problems with a view to their discussion at a subsequent session of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians.
4. At its 104th Session in March 1948, the Governing Body authorized the Office to carry out these studies as envisaged in the resolutions of the Sixth International Conference of Labour Statisticians.
5. In view of the interest of the Sub-Commission on Statistical Sampling in this field, the Office sent out a questionnaire in December 1947 designed to obtain materials relating to the use of sampling
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methods in the cost of living studies. The results of this questionnaire are being collated, and the materials will be presented to the Sub-Commission at its 1948 Session.

6. A supplementary statement on the scope of the work of the International Labour Office in this field will be presented orally by the representative of the International Labour Organization at the meeting of the Statistical Commission. The interest of the Office and the scope of the resolutions of the Sixth International Conference of Labour Statisticians extends to all phases of cost of living Statistics, including the measurement of differences in cost of living in different areas. This last mentioned topic has been the subject of a number of special studies by the Office and is included in the recommendations of the Sixth International Conference of Labour Statisticians.
