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REGIONAL POPULATION PROGRAMME

Note by the Office of the Executive Secretary



REGIONAL POPULATION PROGRAMME

1. The general position of the Latin American Governments vis-à-vis the subject of population has taken a significant turn in the last few years in line with the new approaches adopted at the world level to the prospects of economic and social development and population growth which are reflected in the strategies launched by the United Nations in the 1960s. Transcending the scientific, academic and technical plane on which it had successively and almost exclusively developed up to that time, the problems of population and development leapt to the plane of policies and action, committing the co-operation of international agencies in undertaking new activities and intensifying others which had traditionally been carried out in this and related fields.

2. The discussions and recommendations emanating from the regional Latin American meetings (San José, 1974, and Mexico, 1975) and from the World Population Conference (Bucharest, 1974) constitute all-important milestones in the new position of the Governments in considering population questions. As regards future action of this kind, particular importance attaches to the World Population Plan of Action (Bucharest) and the programme recommendations adopted at the Second Latin American Meeting on Population.

3. Regional activities in the fields of training, research, information and direct technical assistance to governments have hitherto been carried out by the ECLA secretariat and CELADE. The specific responsibilities of the secretariat assumed broader dimensions as a result of the mandates emanating from the Commission at its last three sessions, as also from various recommendations of the United Nations General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. In order to supplement the secretariat's population activities, ECLA supported the work of CELADE and - at its fourteenth and fifteenth sessions - requested it to improve and broaden the scope of its training and research activities in the population field.

4. The ECLA secretariat and CELADE have in the past co-operated in many projects of mutual interest along different operational lines, although these activities did not form part of a duly integrated common programme.

5. These among other data and recognition of the need for the Commission to incorporate in its organization a mechanism which would permanently assume the functions fulfilled by CELADE, the Population Unit of the ECLA secretariat and other programmes in its sphere of action, and which would expand them in a co-ordinated manner with other functions of the secretariat, were the main bases for resolution 345 (AC.88) adopted at the tenth extraordinary session of the Committee of the Whole of ECLA (Mexico, March 1975), which provides that CELADE - an independent institution operating under the aegis of ECLA - should be incorporated in the ECLA system as a permanent institution with its own identity.

6. This institutional arrangement will enable the ECLA secretariat to carry out an extensive programme of population activities, with the substantial assistance of the necessary specialized human resources, basic documentation and institutional organization in the specific field of population.

7. The implementation of the ECLA Population Programme, the broad lines of which are presented in section I of this document, will be the responsibility of CELADE, which will take the final action on this point. The function involving the overall implementation of the Programme should be so understood, without prejudice to the delegation of direct responsibility for specific projects and areas of specific programmes to units of the ECLA secretariat where the interdisciplinary nature of the work to be done, the main approach to the subject and other similar considerations justify a better location of the work from the scientific and functional point of view.

8. CELADE and several population projects - which are currently being implemented by ECLA - receive substantial financial support from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA).

It may be taken for granted that assistance on a similar scale will

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be forthcoming in 1976, as it has already been requested from the Fund. In addition, the Office of the Executive Secretary is entering into the consultations envisaged in resolution 345 (AC.68), adopted on 7 March 1975 by the Committee of the Whole of ECLA at its tenth extraordinary session, with a view to preparing a project for financially assisting CELADE's activities, for submission by the member Governments of the Commission to UNFPA prior to the twentieth session of the Governing Council of UNDP. In this respect, the member Governments are recommended "to request the Governing Council of UNDP and the Executive Director of UNFPA to render financial support for CELADE's activities for a five-year period starting in 1976, taking as a basis UNFPA's contributions for the years 1974 and 1975 and their future projection and bearing in mind the recommendations addressed and the work assigned to ECLA by Governments at the Second Latin American Population Meeting (Mexico City, March 1975)".

9. Furthermore, in considering other potential sources which may contribute to the financing of these activities, as envisaged in operative paragraph 9 of the above resolution, the Executive Secretary of ECLA will duly inform the member Governments concerning the origin of these possible contributions and the purpose for which they would be used within the context of the Regional Population Programme. Advantage will be taken for this purpose of the institutional machinery which the Commission may decide to establish, after considering the options presented by the Office of the Executive Secretary in section II of this note, in conformity with resolution 345 (AC.68). Once the reaction of the member Governments to these potential contributions has been determined, the appropriate agreements would be instrumented, subject to the approval of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and in consultation with the respective Governments.

I. BROAD LINES OF ACTION

10. The Population Programme envisages four broad lines of action to meet the countries' needs, in which priority is assigned to technical assistance. These lines of action are basically in keeping with operational requirements and with the particular nature of certain activities being carried out in highly specific fields, a special example of which would be education: education itself, training and trade; the development and use of methods; research on the population and development problem; and direct technical assistance.

1. Education, training and trade

11. Education and personnel training will continue, as heretofore, by means of five main types of teaching activities designed to provide training at different levels of specialization over periods ranging from two or three years to a few weeks. Since the objectives pursued are different in each case, the orientation, content and requirements also vary widely. The five types of activities are described below:

(a) Post-graduate education and specialized training seminars.

These afford the opportunity to obtain specialized training in population matters over a period of two years within another discipline. It is intended for professionals in economics and sociology who may be interested in interdisciplinary studies;

(b) Regular programme of teaching in connexion with demographic analysis methods and national intensive courses.

The purpose is to provide training over two years for demographer analysts with particular interest in questions of form and methodology. The programme is basically intended for university graduates and government officials with a similar educational background from the various Latin American countries. The national courses being conducted in the respective countries are intended to train intermediate-level technical personnel;

/(c) Under-graduate

- (c) Under-graduate training. Its purpose is to transmit basic demographic concepts during the training of future professionals in the social sciences and health fields. These activities are included as a regular part of the various curricula in university courses;
- (d) Training in methods and techniques applicable to related fields. Comprises a number of teaching activities in fields related to the use of methods and techniques applicable to population research. This special programme is basically designed to train officials concerned with government statistical and planning activities;
- (e) Teaching assistance in training programmes and national and international institutes. Co-operation in national and international programmes in which subjects or areas of demographic content are included in very different types of courses.

12. In view of the foregoing, teaching and training activities should be stepped up in future years in order to increase the Commission's ability to meet new requirements arising from the conclusions adopted in this respect at the Second Latin American Meeting on Population (Mexico City, 3 to 7 March 1975). Special attention should accordingly be given to the advanced training of high-level planners in subjects related to the interaction of demographic phenomena and economic and social development and the training of higher-level professional staff to conduct population studies.

2. Methods of gathering and analysing data

13. The basic purpose of the methodology area is to meet the needs arising in connexion with the collection of data, the application of new techniques and the use of methodological instruments for obtaining a better knowledge of the existing demographic situation. In this context, technical assistance and research acquire a clearly-defined profile in which two components can be distinguished:

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firstly, all efforts directed towards the collection of more and better data which would include experimental and national censuses, population surveys and information systems; and, secondly, activities relating to research and utilization of the material available, which range from the evaluation of data, to the prognosis of future situations, the preparation of population estimates and projections, and the publication of reports.

14. Mention must be made here of the particular importance attaching to work oriented towards the application, adaptation and development of new methods of measuring demographic variables. Once the experimental stage is over, the product of all these activities is placed at the disposal of the countries and is progressively incorporated in successive teaching programmes. The results obtained thus become direct inputs for projects with various objectives in view.

5. Research on population and development

15. The subject of population in relation to development is to be the keynote of a series of special studies, which will be of service in the formulation of specific population measures adopted by governments in the framework of overall development policy. The definition and priorities of these studies will take into account the critical areas in the economic and social development of the Latin American countries, the specific requirements expressed by governments, and the recommendations emanating from the Mexico meeting.

16. In the light of the foregoing considerations, the studies should deal with the following major topics:

- (a) Integration of population policies in development strategies and policies, with the inclusion of analytical models, case studies on demographic change and economic development, evaluation of the demographic effects of development plans, and the formulation of plans for the implementation of population policies;

- (b) Diagnosis and planning of regional development, including planning for metropolitan areas and for sporadically-populated rural areas;
- (c) The geographical mobility of the labour force, income distribution and employment policies;
- (d) The causes and effects of international migratory movements and policies relating thereto, in the context of the analysis and planning of the use of human resources;
- (e) The demographic and social determinants of the participation of women in the labour force, with special reference to fertility, education and the role of women in Latin American society; and
- (f) Relations between the family and economic structures of the rural population, and its reproduction patterns.

4. Technical assistance

17. A point already stressed is that all the activities of the programme will be directed towards serving the countries' needs. Accordingly they are not conceived independently of one another, but are a manifestation of technical assistance itself. This approach will be strengthened in the future, inasmuch as the conclusions reached by the World Population Conference and the Second Latin American Meeting leave no room for doubt as to the role which the various international and regional organizations, in particular ECLA and CELADE, are called upon to play in this field.

18. To the more or less traditional areas of co-operation - collection, processing and analysis of demographic data and intensive courses at the national level - will shortly be added others designed to assist governments in the adoption and implementation of population policy measures.

19. The mechanism through which this co-operation will be channelled consists in an advisory group concerned with the preparation of diagnoses and the formulation of policies relating to population. It is considered that a group with these responsibilities should be

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established and should fulfil its functions in a multidisciplinary framework, and that it should enjoy the collaboration of technical experts from widely varying sources. It would therefore operate as an open group rather than as a permanent nucleus or unit. In the light of the conclusions formulated at the Mexico meeting, the work of this advisory group should result in an approximate definition of the various implications or requisites inherent in the phase prior to the adoption of a demographic policy. With the same end in view, the production of documents on possible population alternatives is contemplated.

20. In this same context, the activities of the group in the field of technical assistance should be directed towards strengthening government action in matters such as the establishment of technical agencies at the national level, responsible for population policies (diagnostic studies, development of models, integration of policies in development strategies, execution of pilot projects, etc.) and for the periodic evaluation and analysis of the effects deriving from the policy adopted.

5. Services

21. In support of the activities required for the purposes of putting into practice the lines of action described above, the following services will be operated; a data bank, computer, information and publication services, and a specialized library. The usefulness of these services is not confined to the work of CELADE and the ECLA secretariat, since they involve institutional resources which are placed at the disposal of national projects and of other international agencies operating in Latin America.

II. INSTITUTIONAL MACHINERY FOR GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION IN THE REGIONAL POPULATION PROGRAMME

22. The sixth extraordinary session of the Committee of the Whole of the Commission made provision for the integration of CELADE in the ECLA system as a permanent institution with its own individual identity, and assigned it direct responsibilities in connexion with ECLA's activities in the field of population (see resolution 345 (AC.68)).

23. Consequently, the secretariat has placed in the hand of CELADE the implementation of the Population Programme, under the terms of paragraph seven of the present document. In the operative part of the above-mentioned resolution, the Committee recommends that the secretariat should study appropriate mechanisms to enable the Latin American governments to take more regular, direct and effective action in the field of population and its relation to economic and social development.

24. The secretariat considers that the task of ensuring the participation of governments in the population activities that the ECLA system is requested to undertake should devolve upon a high-level steering committee composed of representatives of the Latin American countries, whose functions might be the following:

- (a) To lay down general guidelines for the Regional Population Programme;
- (b) To serve as a consultative body to assist the Executive Secretary in the implementation of the Regional Population Programme and in the evaluation of its results; and
- (c) To revise and adopt reports on CELADE's activities and programmes of work.

25. This mechanism would have some of the institutional attributes already put into practice in the ECLA system, although this would not preclude the proposal of others that might prove better adapted to the operational needs of the programme in question. In any event, consideration would be given to the feasibility and advantages of the following alternatives:

/(a) The

- (a) The establishment of a permanent subsidiary organ of the Commission at the governmental level, which would meet at whatever intervals were determined upon;
- (b) A decision to hold periodic meetings of Representatives of the Latin American countries with the aim of pursuing the objectives and discharging the functions described. This arrangement would imply further prolongation of the procedure for consultation with governments already initiated at the Latin American Preparatory Meeting for the World Population Conference (San José, Costa Rica, April 1974) and continued at the Second Latin American Meeting on Population, held in Mexico;
- (c) Without prejudice to the adoption of one or other of the two mechanisms presented in subparagraphs (a) and (b), prior consideration of the possibility of establishing a complementary mechanism consisting in meetings of government experts which could deal with specific topics, and would fulfil functions of advisory assistance to the ECLA secretariat and to the committee, as the case might be.