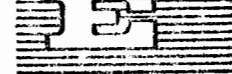


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DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Proposals for regional co-operation in
demographic research and training



1. It is generally recognized that adequate information about the trends and characteristics of population is essential for sound planning of economic development programmes. The size of the population, its composition with respect to age and other characteristics, its geographical distribution, and its changes through natural increase and migration, have a direct influence both upon consumption and upon manpower, employment, and productivity. Demographic factors are equally important in connexion with the planning of housing, education, and other social programmes. Where the population is growing rapidly, as it is at present in most parts of Latin America, attention to this aspect of development planning is particularly important.
2. Considerable progress has been made during the last ten years in the development of demographic statistics through census-taking and the improvement of vital-statistics systems in the Latin American countries. Not much has yet been done, however, to utilize these statistics in studies of the trends and characteristics of population, their relations with economic and social factors, and practical implications for development programmes. Sampling surveys, as a means of obtaining types of information that cannot readily be supplied by censuses and vital statistics registration, have only recently begun to be developed in some countries of the region. The Latin American countries are handicapped by a shortage of personnel with the training required for demographic studies, and often lack the resources to remedy this situation. Regional co-operation in the training of demographic research workers would be very helpful in overcoming this handicap. Meanwhile, co-operation in carrying out research on certain demographic questions of common regional interest would help to avoid wasteful duplication of effort and to ensure effective utilization of the available personnel and other resources for the common benefit of all countries in the region.
3. The Population Commission, at its eighth session (March 1955), suggested the establishment of regional centers for demographic research and training in the less-developed regions, as a practical form of international co-operation in this field (E/2707, pars. 17-19). Upon the Commission's recommendation, the Economic and Social Council adopted at its nineteenth session (May 1955), Resolution 571 (XIX), in which the Secretary-General was requested, inter alia

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"To explore the possibility of establishing standing co-operative relations with qualified scientific institutions in each of the major under-developed regions of the world, which could serve as centres for studies on population problems of importance in the region and for the training of personnel in this field of study on a regional basis."

The Council further recommended that the possibility of co-operation in such centers on the part of scientific institutions in other regions, non-governmental organizations and private foundations also be explored (E/2730, Add.1).

4. The possibility of establishing a regional center of demographic research and training in Latin America was discussed, together with other possible forms of regional co-operation in this field, at the seminar on population studies in Latin America held in Rio de Janeiro, 5-16 December 1955. The participants in the seminar were in general agreement as to the desirability of such an institution being established under the auspices of an International organization. Such questions as the location of the center, its size, the programmes of training and research, and the selection of trainees were also discussed. (E/CN. - meeting 25.)

5. After the seminar, the University of Chile offered its co-operation to the Secretariat in the establishment in Santiago, Chile, of a center for demographic research and training designed to serve the common interests of the Latin American countries. In February 1956 a plan was drawn up, by agreement among the representatives of the Chilean Government, the University, and the Secretariat, indicating the general principles of co-operation in this project and the responsibilities which would be assumed by the Government, through the University, and by the United Nations, for meeting the various requirements of the center. In accordance with this plan, the Government of Chile has submitted a request for technical assistance in the form of expert personnel to form the staff of the center, and has undertaken to furnish suitable premises. A plan for the organization and financing of the center and the programmes of research and training is now being prepared.

6. So far as training is concerned, the aim is to help build up over a period of years a nucleus of persons in each country of Latin America, with

/sufficient knowledge

sufficient knowledge of demography to plan and carry out those population studies which the governments and universities may wish to sponsor, and in turn to train additional workers as required. For this purpose, intensive training at a high level for a small number of trainees is appropriate. Enough training fellowships would be provided to permit an average attendance of about a dozen trainees, with a period of training ranging from one to two years according to the needs of the trainee. The training would include participation in the programme of research being carried out at the center, under the direction of the expert staff. It is estimated that a staff of three experts, in addition to the director of the center, will be required.

7. The programme of research, in addition to providing a practical laboratory for the trainees, will be designed to produce information that is of common interest to various governments and to the United Nations in connexion with development programmes and policies. For example, in the field of internal migration, attention may be directed to the methods of measuring its volume and characteristics, its influence upon the growth, density, and distribution of the rural population, its relations with agricultural and industrial development, and its implications from the demographic point of view with respect to the needs of housing, schools, etc., in the areas of in-migration. It is foreseen also that the center may undertake special studies, with appropriate financial arrangements, on behalf of governments in the region, the Economic Commission for Latin America, the Population Commission, or the specialized agencies.

8. The interested specialized agencies and certain non-governmental organizations, including the Inter-American Statistical Institute and the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, will be invited to co-operate in the organization of the center. Financial contributions will be requested from private foundations in addition to the allocations of technical assistance funds, the contribution of the Host Government, and any contributions which may be offered by the participating Governments, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations. Arrangements will be made for cooperation between the staff of the center and that of ECLA on various aspects of the research and training programme of the center and of ECLA's work programme. Co-operative relations will also be established between this center and other institutions in related fields located in Santiago, especially the international centers for biostatistics and economic statistics, with a view to mutual strengthening and avoidance of any duplication in the programmes of training.

