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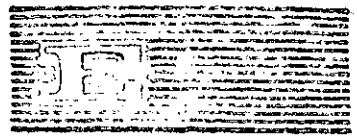

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THE PROSPECTS FOR ACTION IN THE FIELD OF POPULATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The last few years have witnessed the opening-up of new areas of concern, study and co-operation with regard to population questions, particularly those relating to critical situations which affect the level and quality of human life. Since they are the responsibility of governments, in a context of regional co-operation and solidarity, and given the global nature of the problems, population matters and activities should be given expression and organized as part of general policies and those on development planning.

The Regional Population Programme, whose objectives are laid out in section 1 of the present document, intends to give an answer to the demands arising out of this new situation.

Section 2 gives a concise picture of some critical situations in key aspects of economic and social development where the population plays a significant role.

Technical co-operation is the mechanism which government or intergovernmental agencies, in this case CEPAL, use to help the countries to deal with their own population and development problems. Section 3 indicates the complementary role of international co-operation and the need for and requirements of internal development if such co-operation is to be successful, emphasis being placed on the principle of self-reliance.

Lastly, section 4 endeavours to show the need for regional consultative mechanisms to give international co-operation greater feasibility and efficiency and describes the main functions which a regional consultative agency should have, namely to examine the population development problem, the state of population policies and programmes, and the state and progress of regional co-operation.

I N D E X

1. The Regional Population Programme. Expansion of the field of action in response to new concerns

The overall aim of the Regional Population Programme is to create and expand the know-how, capabilities and inputs generally required for the adequate handling of population questions and related matters, and in particular for formulating and implementing policies, development plans and programmes in the field of population.

In order to achieve this aim, the Programme includes actions and activities designed to:

a) Foster understanding in different areas of national life of the nature and importance of the mutual relations between the demographic, socio-economic and environmental factors of development;

b) Develop and improve the continuing capacity of the countries to organize and implement population censuses and surveys (including the processing of data and their publication);

c) Develop and promote improvement of the quality of population statistics, their adaptation to the needs of economic and social planning, and analytical techniques and methods for making better use of them;

d) Maintain up-to-date basic information on the situation and prospects of the demographic evolution of the countries of the region;

e) Promote and develop research projects aimed at clarifying the interrelations between population and development, especially in connexion with quantifying the determinant and consequences of population dynamics in the countries of Latin America, bearing in mind the differential regional systems and social groups;

f) Develop analytical tools, adapted to the conditions of the countries of the region, for the incorporation of demographic variables into the planning process;

g) Promote

g) Promote and develop the preparation of conceptual frameworks (including objectives, targets and instruments) and inputs for formulating, implementing and evaluating population policies and programmes;

h) Stimulate, maintain and improve the training of professionals in demographic analysis and population topics, including specific fields;

i) Publish studies, manuals and other technical reports and disseminate them among the public in different countries; and

j) Keep up a flow of data and documentation on population matters in Latin America.

Many of the Programme activities are of a continuing nature and cover areas of work which the majority of the countries of the region are not in a position to cope with alone, either for reasons of cost, efficiency or specialization of human resources, or simply because these activities are of regional or subregional coverage and therefore are complementary to national activities. Among the Programme activities, mention may be made of the studies being undertaken and the technical documentation being prepared on priority matters relating to the problems of development in Latin America: these will serve as background material for use by the intergovernmental, regional and subregional agencies in formulating their policy objectives and related strategies.

The last few years have witnessed the opening up of a varied range of new areas of concern, study and co-operation with regard to population matters, which extend into the spheres of development policies and planning. The Governments have declared in international and regional forums that policies and measures aimed at influencing the population are an integral part of socio-economic development policies. The logical implication is that, if population objectives and targets are formulated, they should be an explicit part both of the development policies and the corresponding planning process. However, the majority of developing countries have to go through different stages in developing their capacities, tools and inputs to

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the point where they are in a position to formulate population policies integrated in development policies and to include demographic variables in the economic and social planning process.

The data base and the capacity for interpreting and evaluating development problems in terms of population trends and characteristics vary considerably from one country to another. Many countries do not have yet a demographic data base which can be considered adequate and reliable, and the human resources available for population activities are probably inadequate even at a relatively unsophisticated level. Apart from the technical problems, there are also differences in the degree of awareness of the importance to be assigned to the magnitude, trends, structure and geographic distribution of the population in terms of improvement of the level and quality of human life. Some of these differences reflect real conditions, as for example, in the case of the relation between natural resources and population, while others correspond rather to political positions.

Mention may be made of a number of factors which constitute an obstacle to the formulation of population policies integrated in development policies and to the incorporation of demographic variables in development plans, especially: i) lack of adequate population data; ii) inadequate knowledge of the relations between demographic factors and socio-economic development in the specific context of each country and the corresponding conceptual framework; iii) lack of interest, willingness or understanding regarding the importance of policies for achieving development objectives, or the assignment of low priority to such policies; iv) lack of personnel trained in demographic analysis methods and in research on population and policy design; v) lack of suitable institutional arrangements for facilitating and co-ordinating the collection of data, research, training, and the formulation and implementation of policies; and vi) lack of efficient machinery for communicating research results and experience.

In broader terms, it could be said that success in overcoming these obstacles depends on a series of conditions or requisites which must be

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satisfied. The first of these is the existence of coherent development policies and plans, clearly defining economic and social objectives and targets, and long-term strategies which can serve as a frame of reference for population policies and programmes. The second is that there should be sufficient recognition, and some measure of national consensus, regarding the importance of demographic (biomedical, social, ecological, and cultural) aspects in the prevalence, emergence, magnitude and solution of the economic, social and environmental problems of development. The third is the establishment or adaptation of institutional mechanisms, the provision of specialized training for national scientists, technicians and managers, and the availability of the necessary know-how and technology in order to be able to handle and provide a suitable response to those development problems where population trends and characteristics play an important role.

Since the population is the main agent of the economic and social development process, development planning should include it as a basic variable in all aspects of the process where it occurs as a problem element, as is also the case with such elements as employment, regional development (rural and urban), the quality of the environment, income distribution and the availability of basic social services.

Although some Latin American countries have formulated policies explicitly aimed at influencing population variables, few have incorporated them in their development policies or plans on an operational basis.

In Latin American planning practice, demographic information and studies have been used at the diagnosis stage, and also to some extent in determining the objectives and targets of sectoral plans (health, education, employment). For this purpose, population projections with different levels of disaggregation have been used according to the requirements of the planners.

To a large extent, the scanty consideration given to population factors in determining the mean and instruments for implementing policies reflects the unsatisfactory state of knowledge regarding the interrelations between

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and those of a socio-economic nature and the fact that the conceptual and quantitative models used consider the demographic variables only as data, if they include them at all. Moreover, the population projections generally used do not make clear the hypotheses of economic and social change which might take place in the period they cover, nor the effects of population dynamics on such hypotheses.

To consider demographic variables as exogenous data might be regarded as acceptable when short -and medium- term plans are being prepared, but even in such cases a longer-term view must be taken of the different options or alternatives for development and their feasibility, and in this context it is important to consider the influence which economic and social changes could have on those variables.

2. Critical development situations in which the population is of significant importance

The growth and spatial distribution patterns of the population occupy a dominant position in the set of demographic variables involved in the population development problem.

Before going on to discuss this topic, it should perhaps be acknowledged that the trends observed in the last few decades in the volume and geographical distribution of the population cannot be modified beyond certain limits in any relatively near future, and efforts to resolve in any of the problems inherent in development should therefore take this fact into account.

Thus, even if substantial modifications were to take place in the level of fertility of the developing countries as a result of such factors as urban development, changes in social structures improvement in the levels of living of the less favoured groups and the activities of family planning

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programmes, the population growth rates will still be sufficiently high during several generations to being about a considerable increase in the population.

The countries of Latin America are going through different stages of urbanization. In some -the smallest group- this process has reached levels comparable to those of the developed countries in other regions, but the majority are going through the more dynamic stages of the urbanization cycle, or will enter this phase in the coming decades. The process needs to be regulated in order to diminish the adverse effects which be observed everywhere, but their can be no question of trying to stop it, since it seems to be inherent in economic and social development. The task presents major difficulties, since no policies or methods of proven effectiveness are known which can substantially modify the migratory trends which have resulted in the patterns of spatial distribution now prevailing, and in any case such policies and measures as have been applied with relative success in a few countries are very expensive and could only produce significant results in the long term. In brief, the countries should be prepared to cope with a second form of manifestation of demographic inertia which is additional to the propulation growth inertia and is indeed to a large extent one of its consequences.

In so far as the growth, geographical distribution and demographic and social characteristics of the population are not in keeping with the targets of development, or constitute obstacles in some of its stages, a critical situation arises in the area of population development problems. The explicit aim of concerted regional action in this field should therefore be to help to bring demographic trends into line with the trends and objectives of economic and social development.

The first step in tackling the population development problem consists of identifying critical problem areas and areas for government action. This is precisely a matter of those strategic areas of development where demographic variables play a recognized role, and to which governments and international agencies have given preferential attention. It is not difficult

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to show that the problems of employment and income distribution, regional development, habitat and the quality of the urban and rural environment, basic social services (health, education, social security), food and natural resources belong to this particularly important group.

In view of the internal structural diversity of each country's society, which takes the form of substantial differences in socio-economic aspects and demographic performance, attention should be concentrated on groups of the population -defined on the basis of ecological and social criteria- which are considered to be strategic from the point of view of policy objectives and planning. Examples of such groups are the marginal population of the metropolitan areas, the scattered rural population, the population of new cities undergoing a population growth explosion, extreme poverty groups, and labour from the urban informal market.

The areas of critical problems and strategic groups mentioned above are prominent among the topics which have been the subject of attention at CEPAL intergovernmental meetings held in recent years and in the secretariat's programmes of work.[1/]

Modern economic growth involves changes in the patterns of spatial distribution of the population within the countries. The most typical expressions of this in the present conditions of the developing countries, which apply to the majority of the Latin American countries, are rapid urbanization and the emergence of big concentrations of population (metropolitanization), largely as a result of the inability of the agricultural sector to generate employment and the consequent response of the labour force to the changing distribution of production resources.

In many Latin American countries, and indeed to some extent in all of them, there is a tendency towards the concentration of national income, the

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1/ CEPAL, Conclusions and Recommendations of CEPAL Meetings held in the Period 1975-1977, E/CEPAL/1031, March 1977.
CEPAL, Draft Annual Report, E/CEPAL/1030, March 1977.
CEPAL, Programme of Work of the Commission, 1977-1979, E/CEPAL/1032, March 1977.

product generated by industry, the mass media, the specialized services to enterprises and government agencies, residential activities (housing, urban development works, etc.) and private services (education, health, recreation, etc.) in a small area of their territory.

There is consensus that the market forces tend to increase rather than diminish the unequal spatial distribution of the resources of production, and consequently, to accentuate the pattern of concentrated distribution of the population. Migration, interregional trade and movements of capital are the processes which show up the difference in growth and the growing gap between rich and poor regions. There is a vicious circle which strengthens the trends towards the concentration of activities and population and the growing contrast between affluence and poverty in regional terms.

In the countries of Latin America, the human environment has not escaped adverse influences either, although in different degrees of intensity and with different features. This occurs both in rural and urban areas, but it is the deterioration of the latter which can most clearly and strikingly be related to demographic factors.

The deterioration of the urban environment takes various different forms. Some of its manifestations have their origins in the extreme poverty which affects some groups of the population, while other may be linked to the expressions of affluence to be found in the major cities. The deterioration may also be a result of the physical growth of the city, in terms of costs of basic services, irrational use of land, unproductive use of time, raising of prices and other diseconomies. These factors -poverty, affluence, physical growth of the city- often have a convergent influence in certain forms of deterioration.

Similar conditions are to be found in many intermediate cities whose population has been growing at very high rates but whose physical infrastructure has grown considerably more slowly.

The structural transformation of the economy is inherent in modern economic development. Industrialization and technological innovations of all

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types imply a continuing reduction, in relative terms, of the product generated by agriculture, and hence of the population depending on work in this sector. In Latin America, as in developing countries in other regions, this transformation of the economy has been taking place along-side a farm of agricultural development which has been inadequate not only in terms of productivity per unit of land, but also, and still more significantly, in terms of structural changes in rural society.

The trends as regards resources and consumption, profitability factors and modifications in the structure of demand, together with the structure of land ownership, have been causing increasing deterioration of the economic base of the rural population and of the cities which depend heavily on the agricultural economy, thus widening the gap in income levels and living conditions between regions. This process stimulates and even obliges workers to emigrate in search of economic opportunities and educational and health services.

At the same time, economic and social backwardness keeps in being the conditions which determine a high rate of fertility. The rural population therefore maintains a significant population growth rate which, by exerting pressure on the available production resources, strengthens the stimuli for exodus of the population.

The form in which the benefits of economic growth are distributed, and the growth itself, depend to a large extent on the level and structure of employment, and the problem of reconciling economic growth and adequate employment is one of the main difficulties in securing development on modern bases.

As already noted, the investment trends in urban activities and the agricultural sector which are to be observed in the countries of the region have not succeeded in creating sufficient opportunities for steady employment in keeping with population growth and urbanization.

The role of employment as a determining socio-economic factor in the growth and spatial distribution of the population must be stressed chronic

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unemployment and underemployment are generally synonymous with extreme poverty, and as a result the population affected does not have access to education and health services. High levels of fertility, infant mortality and outward migration are the consequences of this in depressed areas, while in the big cities economic and social margination is the characteristic feature, accompanied by the patterns of reproduction typical of under-development.

Although the level of living of the great mass of the population is inevitably linked to the employment situation, it is no less true that demographic trends and population characteristics have a definite influence on supply of manpower in quantitative and qualitative terms. Both the natural growth rate and migratory movements obviously put pressure on the labour market. The big cities, as well as the intermediate -size urban centres which have been growing at a dizzy rate- under the stimulus of relatively large-scale industrial expansion, show clear symptoms of the adverse effects of an excess supply of manpower and these effects are usually more noticeable in certain sectors which employ unskilled labour.

In Latin America, concern about international migration concentrates on two aspects, both of which are of vital importance for the region's development, namely the brain drain and the regional integration of the labour market.

The emigration of scientists, professionals and skilled labour in general is a common feature of all the countries of the region which has been accentuated over the last few decades and is favoured by the emigration policies of the developed countries. Although the available statistics are partial and incomplete, it is known that this emigration represents a substantial economic loss in terms of training costs and of the productive resources thus taken from the national economy.

Although intra-regional migration is not new to some Latin American countries, it can be said that it has assumed larger proportions since 1950, when in some cases it began to take the place of the immigration of

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unskilled labour from Europe and in others to provide agricultural labour for thinly-populated regions or areas affected by internal migration to the main cities of the recipient country. In both cases it was mainly a matter of population movements between neighbouring countries.

This type of intra-regional migration has created problems both for the migrants and for the countries involved. Sometimes the lack of bilateral agreements to regulate migratory movements, and at other times anachronistic legislation on the subject, encourage illegal entry or residence with their sequels of discrimination in the labour market, lack of legal protection, and absence of social security and other forms of assistance and orientation.

3. Technical co-operation. Conditions and problems

The technical and financial assistance provided by international agencies only partially and temporarily replaces the national resources which must be mobilized in order to set up and keep in operation a group of programmes, projects and basic activities in population matters. However, until such time as the countries of the region create the necessary institutional conditions, acquire their own technical resources and are in a position to assign adequate funds, external assistance must continue to play a qualitatively important role.

Although the developing countries, with the help of regional assistance, could make substantial progress in handling population activities with their own resources in the next decade, new demands for techical assistance should nevertheless be expected. The opening up of new areas of concern, more complex approaches designed to secure a better understanding of reality, and the introduction of more sophisticated technology are among the factors which will generate demands for external assistance. Information and data-processing activities in connexion with population, for which

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there is a growing demand at all levels, illustrate the effect of the changes which are taking place in population matters and in the countries' expectations of external assistance for such activities.

The growth of expectations in this area is not spontaneous, but rather the result of decisions and commitments which the governments have been making within the international and regional consultative agencies on the majority of the problems of economic and social development relating to population matters.

The magnitude of the demand and the forms of external assistance also partly depend on national factors relating to the institutional policy of the government agencies, their awareness of the need for assistance, and the human and financial resources at their disposal. Thus, for example, institutional policy may ignore or simple minimize the importance of carrying out specific population activities over and above those traditionally carried out with existing local resources, but the growing awareness of the relations between population matters and the different areas both of traditional government action and of new public concern are bound to lead to increased needs for external technical assistance.

Over the last two decades, the bulk of regional technical assistance has taken the form of training programmes, support for data analysis programmes and diagnostic studies of the population situation, help in the processing of census and survey data, and advisory services in connexion with research into trends, patterns and factors of fertility, mortality and migration. In recent years, with recognition of the undoubted links between the demographic features of the population and economic and social development, and hence the need to include the population variable in policy design and the planning process, the area of action has expanded both for government bodies and for the institutions called upon to provide technical advisory services.

Regional advisory services to assist the countries in formulating and implementing population programmes and policies and carrying out the

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corresponding planning process constitute a relatively new and complex activity, of which there is little experience and the available knowledge is as yet inadequate. This task goes beyond the technical limits of a single discipline, so that in order to tackle it the assistance of specialists covering a wide range of economic, social and political matters is required.

In iddition to the substantive knowledge of the problems and the technical capacity for programming and implementation needed for population policy design and the introduction of demographic inputs and targets into the planning process, there are also certain institutional and logistic elements which are essential in order to ensure the feasibility and efficiency of external technical co-operation: namely, an adequate degree of understanding in national public and private sectors of the importance of population matters and the availability of suitable data, specialized personnel, financial resources and institutional organization.

One of the main objectives of international technical assistance in population matters is to promote awareness of the social, economic and environmental implications of national and international population problems and to foster strategies for dealing with them in keeping with the plans priorities of each country. The understanding or awareness of these facts is a gradual process which takes time, as may be seen from recent experience of the evolution of the countries' general position on population matters, and it is closely related to political ideologies, explicitly or implicitly adopted development models, and geopolitical considerations. At the same time, the influence exerted on these positions by the relations between the population trends and characteristics of each individual country and the structure and growth of their economies must not be ignored.

At the present level of "awareness", it seems that the governments of the majority of the countries of the region would not favour the formulation of population programmes with broad coverage, but would prefer sectoral programmes such as the preparation of diagnoses of the population situation and its implications for the social sectors of planning, support for

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the extension of mother and child health activities, including family planning activities, or the development of information systems providing data and documentation on population. The majority of these activities are sectoral initiatives (coming from ministries, departments, etc.), and are not structured within a general government policy.

A basic principle in the international assistance strategy is the need to satisfy requirements relating to human resources and institutional organization, so that the developing countries will become self-reliant as rapidly as possible, since the fostering of self-reliance is one of the basic aims of technical co-operation.

The importance of self-reliance suggests that high priority should be assigned, among other activities, to the development of human resources through training programmes, the transfer of technology, and the establisment of institutions at the national level, especially for collecting and analysing population data, designing policies and implementing population programmes.

There has been definite progress in the region with regard to the availability of trained personnel. However, the potential qualitative and quantitative demand is growing more rapidly than the effective supply. There is also a problem of the efficient utilization of the human resources available, which is closely related to the institutional development of the countries. It should be mentioned here that the international position taken by governments with respect to the importance of population matters should be in keeping with their action to support and strengthen national organizations and programmes for the production of statistical data, training of personnel research and, generally speaking, activities producing inputs for government policies and plans at different levels.

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4. Towards a regional consultative mechanism on population matters

From the above review it is clear that, owing to its breadth and complexity, the feasibility and effectiveness of technical co-operation in population matters depends much more than it did a few years ago on the full shaving of the work between the regional agency providing it and the government benefiting from it. The principles of international co-operation already recognized by all countries must therefore be further enhanced through institutional machinery and operational programmes capable of defining priority needs, allocating resources, utilizing adequately and opportunely the work of advisers and, above all, ensuring compliance with and development of lines and plans of work using local resources.

What is needed, then, is broader and more direct participation by the governments of the region in the general orientation and allocation of priorities of the CEPAL population programme, through the establishment for this purpose of adequate consultative mechanisms within the Commission itself. The more frequent and direct presence of the countries, either in consultative bodies or at technical meetings on population matters, would also serve as an effective means of promoting government measures to stimulate support reinforce, as the case may be, national agencies and programmes operating in the specific area of population and related matters, such as the collection and preparation of data, training of specialized staff, execution of studies and research, formulation of policies, and preparations of government plans and programmes for direct action.

The Government consultative mechanism for population matters could, independently of the institutional form it might take, have the following main responsibilities:

a) To re-examine periodically the population development problem in the region, bearing in mind such points as changes in the population and in economic, social and political conditions at the national, regional and international levels; awareness of the emergence of new problems; reorientation of

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development strategies; data, know-how and information casting new light on these problems and on the feasibility and probable effects of direct or indirect policies on population dynamics and geographical distribution.

The aim of this examinations would be to define or redefine problems and critical areas calling for priority action at the national and regional levels. This exercise is extremely important for evaluating and if necessary, reorienting or emphasizing some of CELADE's activities in the population field and, in the last instance, bringing the Regional Population Programme into line with the new definitions and objectives formulated.

These periodic examinations would be in keeping with the broader aim, formulated in the World Population Plan of Action (1974), of assigning to governments the duty "to determine and assess the population problems and needs of their countries in the light of their political, social, cultural, religious and economic conditions" -an undertaking which "should be carried out systematically and periodically so as to promote informed, rational and dynamic decision-making in matters of population and development"(Paragraph 98).

b) To review the state of population policies and programmes in the countries of the region. The main aim of this would be to build up a picture of government policies in population matters within the broad context of global, sectoral and regional economic and social development plans and programmes, including details of legal and institutional instruments, allocation of resources, objectives and targets, and progress in their implementation.

The purpose of this exercise is in line with the position taken by the governments of the region at the Second Latin American Meeting on Population (Mexico, 1975), where they ratified the recommendation contained in the World Population Plan of Action that population measures and programmes shoud be integrated into comprehensive social and economic plans and programmes and this integration should be reflected in the goals, objectives, instrumentalities and organizations for planning within the countries. It also takes account of a new situation which has been appearing in recent years and which

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is frequently manifested in health, education and communication programmes aimed, at least in a subsidiary way, at modifying the demographic behaviour of the population. Several countries have also formulated groups of principles and objectives for population policies in legal instruments and/or in development plans and in some cases a high-level administrative agency has been set up with advisory, co-ordinative, supervisory and executive functions in population policy matters, or else this responsibility has been given to a specific government department.

By these means, a system could be established for exchanging information and experience on political, institutional, cultural, financial and other problems relating to the formulation, operation and evaluation of government policies and programmes aimed at producing changes, directly or by induction, in population dynamics and distribution. This would open up possibilities for laying the basis for intergovernmental co-operation in these matters and taking decisions on the amount and types of the technical co-operation which are expected to be received under CEPAL's regional population programme.

c) To examine periodically the state and progress of technical co-operation in the region. The aim here is to draw up a balance of the demand for direct external technical advisory services by the countries and the level of response by the agencies operating at the regional level, including achievements as regards the objectives pursued.

This examination would make it possible to detect problems which might diminish the efficiency of this system and of the regional co-operation programmes. Without a doubt, there are problems relating to financing and to the best use of the specialized human resources available. Other problems arise from the operational methods followed by the advisory services and the fact that the counterpart institutional backing is usually rather weak, except in a few specific programmes which merit full support at a high government level. Lastly, a documented review of these matters would allow the consultative agency to provide CEPAL with guidance as to the policy and *modus operandi* to be followed in technical co-operation on population matters, and also to define areas for government action in which the introduction and/or strengthening of technical advisory services is feasible and of high priority.