

UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



GENERAL
E/CN.12/510
19 March 1959

ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA
Eighth Session
Panama City, Panama, 13-23 May 1959

PROCEEDINGS OF THE POPULATION COMMISSION AT ITS NINTH
AND TENTH SESSIONS WHICH ARE OF INTEREST TO THE
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA

Note by the Executive Secretary

REGIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC STUDIES

1. At its ninth session (25 February - 8 March 1957), the Population Commission considered a report by the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/138) on the work of the regional economic commissions on demographic aspects of the problems of economic development, including a statement on the progress of ECLA's study of population growth and manpower requirements in Latin America. The Population Commission proposed (E/2957/Rev.1. paragraph 88) "that further work on the demographic aspects of this study should relate to the following topics:

"(a) Population growth, structure and distribution

"Size of the population of various Latin American countries and their urban and rural parts. Fertility, mortality and natural increase. Sex and age structure of the population. International migration and its influence upon population growth and structure. Future population projections by sex and age groups.

"(b) Internal migration

"Volume and trends of migration within various countries of the region, with special reference to rural-urban migration. Effects of internal migration upon the growth of population and its sex-age structure, with special reference to rural and urban areas. Characteristics of migrants relevant to the effect of their movement upon manpower and employment in areas of in-migration and out-migration.

"(c) Size, composition and distribution of the economically active population

"Ratio of economically active males and females to male and female population in various age groups and in urban and rural areas. Prospective future trends in these ratios. Projections of economically active population for future years based on population projections by sex and age groups. Prospective changes in distribution of the economically active population between urban and rural areas and between agricultural and non-agricultural industries, as influenced by demographic factors."

2. The Population Commission went on to say (ibid., paragraph 89),

"The Commission feels that these projects too should be implemented by the Secretary-General in view of the relative urgency and importance within the region of the economic problems to which the various projects suggested are relevant and of the Economic and Social Council's recommendation with regard to co-ordination and concentration of effort on certain problems of major importance (resolution 630 A I (XXII)). Further study of the questions listed under topic (a) will provide a necessary basis, not only for full consideration of

/manpower problems

manpower problems from a demographic point of view, but also for the analysis of other aspects of population problems relevant to the economic and social development of the Latin American countries. The Commission has been informed that a study of population in Central America has been requested under the technical assistance programme, which will cover some or all of the points listed under topic (a) so far as the countries in that area are concerned (E/CN.9/130, para. 15). The Commission therefore suggests that priority be given to the study of topic (a) with reference to the remainder of the Latin American region, and to the publication of a report on this topic that would take into account also the results of the Central American study. Attention to topic (b) at an early stage would also seem desirable in view of the need to take account of internal migration in analysing the points listed under topic (c). Work on topic (c) should be co-ordinated with the work being done at Headquarters on the demographic aspects of manpower and employment problem."

3. At its tenth session (9-20 February 1959), the Population Commission received a further report from the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/154) which included a statement of the progress during 1957-1959 on the demographic aspects of ECLA's programme, and the activities of the demographer who was attached to the ECLA secretariat in 1957. The Population Commission noted (E/3207, paragraph 64) that it had not been possible, with only one man available for the demographic work of the regional economic commission, to complete the work mentioned in item (a) of paragraph 1 above. The Population Commission also noted that a similar shortage of staff had impeded the progress of the demographic work of other regional secretariats, and proceeded to make the following suggestion (E/3207, paragraph 67): "Aware of the urgency of the needs for regional demographic studies, the Population Commission wishes to suggest to the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East and the Economic Commission for Latin America that they give consideration to the desirability and feasibility of strengthening their demographic staffs."

4. At its tenth session the Population Commission also reviewed a report of the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East on population trends and related problems of economic development in the ECAFE region (pre-print from the June 1959 issue of the Economic Bulletin for Asia and the Far East). The Population Commission referred to this report as an "outstanding recent result of regional demographic work" and commended it "as a model for the consideration of other regional commissions" (E/3207, paragraph 63).

REGIONAL CENTRE FOR DEMOGRAPHIC TRAINING AND RESEARCH

5. The Population Commission also considered, at its tenth session, a report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/148) on the activities of the regional centres of demographic training and research which have been established under the Technical Assistance programme in Latin America and in Asia and the Far East. The Latin American regional centre has been established, upon the request of the Chilean Government, at the University of Chile, Santiago, for a period of three years which will come to an end in 1960. With reference to these centres the Population Commission stated in its report (E/3207):

"50. Experts in the analysis of population trends are comparatively few even in countries well provided with statistical services; they are very scarce indeed in countries with poor statistical services, where they are actually most needed. The Commission views the scarcity of qualified personnel as one of the greatest impediments to the advancement of demographic knowledge in the world at present. Although the need for demographic information is increasingly appreciated, it is still not sufficiently understood that this need can be met only with a staff of persons especially qualified in this field. The effort to increase the number of people trained in demographic analysis is therefore, in the eyes of the Commission, one of the most important tasks to be undertaken in the next few years by the United Nations in the field of population.

"51. The chief instrument under the Commission's purview for meeting the need for qualified personnel in technologically less advanced areas consists in two regional demographic research and training centres - one in Santiago, Chile, for the Latin American region, the other in Chembur, near Bombay, India, for the region of Asia and the Far East. In these centres, suitable candidates from the countries of each region are undergoing systematic training in demographic techniques and are participating in research projects of interest in the regions concerned. Because of their comparatively recent establishment - 1957 in both instances - training still outweighs research, but research activities are now being expanded in conformity with the stated purposes of these centres, as endorsed by the Population Commission. The staff of the Bombay centre will presently be augmented through the recruitment of a person solely devoted to the direction of research programmes. The purpose of research projects to be carried out at the centres is at least three-fold: actual experience in research is important for trainees if they are to attain a high degree of qualification; the centres, in their co-operation

/with Governments

with Governments and national institutions, will produce research findings desired by those bodies; finally, the results of research will afford the best practical demonstration of the usefulness of analytical demographic work.

"52. The three year agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Chile with respect to the Santiago centre will come to an end in 1960, and the agreement with the Government of India on behalf of the Bombay centre concludes in 1962. Indefinite support of these centres by the United Nations is not intended, but it will have to continue for some time if the centres are eventually to be in a position to provide for their own continuation through other means. The Commission strongly feels that a new agreement with the Government of Chile, or with other Governments in the region, should be negotiated to provide for continuance of the Latin American centre. Not only is this centre performing a valuable training function, but the new census results will provide a wealth of material suitable for much needed research. With respect to the Bombay centre the Commission wishes to postpone a recommendation until its next session, since its operation has been provided for up to 1962. Close liaison between the two centres is recommended, as well as between these centres and the regional research and training centres in the social sciences established at Calcutta, Rio de Janeiro, and Santiago, under the auspices or with the support of UNESCO."

REGIONAL SEMINAR ON EVALUATION AND UTILIZATION OF CENSUS RESULTS

6. The Population Commission, at its tenth session, noted with approval that a regional seminar was planned to be held in Latin America during 1959, for discussion of the evaluation and utilization of the results of the population censuses to be taken in and around 1960 (E/3207, paragraph 55). The plans for this seminar were set forth in a report by the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/152). The purpose is to assist the Latin American Governments in planning their census tabulations and analyses of the census results so as to obtain information of the greatest practical utility for the formulation of economic and social development programmes and policies. A grant has been received from a foundation to cover the cost of the project to the United Nations.