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PROGRESS REPORT ON DEVELOPMENT OF STATISTICS FOR SOCIAL PROGRAMMES

(Memorandum by the Secretary-General)

Table of Contents

	<u>Paragraph</u>
I. Compendium of Social Statistics	3-12
II. Methodology of household surveys	13-23
III. International definition and measurement of levels of living	24-28
IV. Housing statistics (other than the 1960 housing census programme)	29-41
V. Classification for international analysis of population by socio-economic characteristics	42-45

1. This report is designed to inform the Commission of progress achieved in developing statistics for social programmes, according to the plan set forth by the Statistical Commission at its tenth session (E/3126, paras. 106-144), carried forward at its eleventh session (E/3375, paras. 89-127) and developed in detail by the inter-agency Working Party on Statistics for Social Programmes of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination at its second and third sessions, 19-23 September 1960 and 16-20 October 1961.
2. The projects which form the work programme reported on below are the Compendium of Social Statistics; the Handbook of Household Surveys, international definition and measurement of levels of living, a standard classification indicative of the socio-economic structure of countries; and activities in developing housing statistics, other than those connected with periodic censuses of housing which are set forth separately in E/CN.3/295.

I. COMPENDIUM OF SOCIAL STATISTICS

3. At its eleventh session, the Commission had for consideration an outline of the proposed contents of the first issue of the Compendium of Social Statistics, which had been prepared by the Secretary-General on the basis of recommendations made by the inter-agency Working Party on Statistics for Social Programmes. The Commission concluded that the topics as described were generally adequate for the first issue and recommended that the Secretary-General, in consultation with the specialized agencies concerned, should determine the final contents of the Compendium, make provision for future issues to encompass additional subjects and provide for greater depth in the treatment afforded topics scheduled for the first issue, including classification by socio-economic groupings [res. 10 (XI)].

A. Status of the Compendium

4. In accordance with the Commission's recommendation, the Compendium was discussed at the second and third meetings of the Working Party. At its third session, 16-20 October 1961, the Working Party took note that, under present directives from the Economic and Social Council [res. 663E (XXIV)], the 1963 (third) Report on the World Social Situation will include inter alia a detailed and comprehensive review of changes in levels of living throughout the world as

well as analysis of such special problems as the situation demands, and that it therefore would need to be prepared in concert with the Compendium of Social Statistics. Inasmuch as the Report will rely on the Compendium for many of the basic statistical data, the Working Party decided that it would be desirable to have a preliminary draft available about the middle of 1962. It was considered that amendments and revisions of series would be acceptable until about 1 November 1962, and that the first Compendium should be issued early in 1963. Accordingly, arrangements have been made to assemble a working draft of the Compendium tables by 1 July 1962 and to circulate this to the agencies for amendment and revision; these revised and supplemented tables will be due in the United Nations Statistical Office no later than 1 November 1962. During November and December 1962, the first provisional issue of the Compendium will be prepared for reproduction by photo-offset printing in a bilingual (English/French) edition. It is anticipated that this first issue would be ready for distribution with the Report on the World Social Situation, which will come before the Social Commission in the spring of 1963.

B. Contents of the Compendium

5. The Working Party examined the draft pilot tables prepared by the agencies concerned and made a number of specific comments respecting their content and arrangement. The list of tables as originally drawn up (see E/CN.3/269 and Corr.1) had so far been modified only slightly. The Working Party felt that this outline could suitably serve as a guide but that agencies should not feel obliged to adhere to it strictly. It felt that there was room for a bolder approach in seeking to make the data more meaningful for interpretation of world social conditions and trends therein, and that in further elaborating the tables, compilers might find additional opportunities for cross-classifications and other relationships which would facilitate analysis.

6. It was agreed that head-notes and foot-notes should be included in the Compendium tables, but that these should be limited to notes describing the salient points of the series and drawing attention to the main problems of comparability and interpretation. The Compendium would not contain detailed reference notes nor textual material of an analytical nature.

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7. Originally, it was thought the statistical data included in the Compendium would cover a recent ten-year period, particularly data from the 1950 and 1960 censuses of population. It is doubtful, however, that many of the relevant tabulations from the 1960 censuses will be available by mid-1962 or even by the end of the year. It is planned, therefore, to include estimates in so far as these will provide comparisons over time.

C. Future work

8. As mentioned in paragraph 3, the Statistical Commission at its 11th session recommended that provision be made in future issues of the Compendium for inclusion of additional subjects, such as the distribution of households and the gainfully employed population by levels of income; for suitable classification of subjects by socio-economic groupings; and in general, for greater depth in the treatment of subjects now listed.

9. Means of pursuing these objectives are being explored, and steps taken in connexion with the development of a standard socio-economic classification are set forth in paragraphs 42-45.

10. With respect to development of additional and expanded series for inclusion in future issues of the Compendium, the Commission may wish to discuss whether it would be desirable to invite the Member States to publish annual social statistics reports containing basically the same data as those included in the Compendium. The compilation of national data for such reports would need to be made by the central statistical services in collaboration with all national agencies concerned, for example, the ministries of health and education, housing agencies, central banks and so forth. Such compilations would be useful at the national level, as well as constituting an effective method of stimulating the development of data for future issues of the international Compendium.

11. Because many of the statistical data for the Compendium have to be obtained from population censuses or from sample surveys, which are not likely to be repeated every year, the Statistical Commission may wish to consider whether a publication at four- or five-year intervals would be sufficient for its purposes.

12. At its 13th session, the Social Commission drew the attention of Member States to the desirability of increased assistance, through the United Nations

and the specialized agencies, to developing countries (1) in carrying out social surveys basic to determining their development needs and (2) in training personnel qualified to further national development programmes in both social and economic fields [res. I (XIII)]. The Statistical Commission may wish to express its views on the desirability of providing parallel assistance in imparting techniques of sample surveying and in training statisticians to undertake these inquiries and to analyse the results.

II. METHODOLOGY OF HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS

13. At its 11th session, the Statistical Commission had for consideration an outline setting forth the proposed contents of a handbook on the methodology of sample surveys of family living conditions, prepared by the Secretary-General on the basis of suggestions made by the inter-agency Working Party on Statistics for Social Programmes at its first session. The Commission agreed with the need for promoting the household-survey method of data collection, especially in less developed countries, and expressed the feeling that it would be useful to suggest the topics which might be included in a multi-purpose survey, the methodological problems involved with each topic and examples of suitable organizational arrangements. In connexion with methodological problems, the Commission recommended [res. 12 (XI)] that the Secretary-General convene an ad hoc working group of specialists in sample-survey methods for the purpose of recommending methods of collecting statistics for social programmes generally and for the Compendium of Social Statistics specifically. It also recommended that work on the Handbook continue in collaboration with the specialized agencies. The report of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Specialists in Sample Survey Methods, which met in Geneva, 9-13 October 1961, is set forth in E/CN.3/284; progress in developing the Handbook is described below.

A. Status of the Handbook

14. In accordance with the Commission's recommendation, preliminary drafts of the introduction and subject-matter chapters of a possible Handbook were prepared for consideration of the Working Party on Statistics for Social Programmes at

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its second session (19-23 September 1960). As a result of the deliberations of this group, the drafts were revised and put before the Working Party again at the third session (16-20 October 1961).

B. Contents of the Handbook

15. In this latest examination of the draft chapters, the Working Party re-emphasized the point that no chapter in the Handbook would attempt to deal exhaustively with questions and techniques which are applicable to intensive surveys requiring for their conduct subject-matter specialists. It was again pointed out that the purpose of the Handbook was to indicate, to those entrusted with the conduct of multi-purpose household surveys, the types of questions on each topic which could be successfully asked, especially in less developed countries. Further, the Working Party emphasized that the Handbook could not deal in detail with questions such as sample design, time reference periods and so forth, all of which would need to be evaluated by the national statistician in charge in the light of local conditions.

16. The Working Party discussed each individual chapter extensively and made specific suggestions for revisions and additions. Having completed this careful scrutiny, the Working Party recommended that the first issue of the Handbook contain eleven chapters and a bibliography as follows, and that consideration of a final draft take place at its next session.

- (1) Short introduction with outline of contents and description of Handbook.
- (2) A methodological chapter with two, three or more sections in which will be dealt with questions on: methodology, design of the questionnaire, training of interviewers, organization of the survey, household and family concepts, etc.
- (3) Demographic characteristics, including internal migration.
- (4) Income and expenditure.
- (5) Economic activities of the household.
- (6) Food consumption and nutrition.
- (7) Employment.
- (8) Housing.
- (9) Social security and welfare services.
- (10) Educational characteristics and cultural activities.

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(11) Health.

(12) Bibliography.

17. The draft chapters of the Handbook were also considered by the Ad Hoc Working Group of Specialists in Sample Survey Methods, mentioned in paragraph 13. This Group made a number of detailed observations, which are set forth in E/CN.3/284. These, together with the suggestions of the Working Party on Statistics for Social Programmes, are now being incorporated into revised drafts for consideration at the fourth session of the Working Party (tentatively scheduled for September 1962, in Paris, under the sponsorship of UNESCO).

18. In the course of the discussion, the Working Party touched on another question which may be of interest to the Commission. This had to do with the appropriateness of the household-survey method for collecting information on a number of factors bearing upon levels of living, such as social security and the availability of, and access to, medical service, schools, public transport and communication. It was the general view of the Working Party that some of these topics could sometimes be studied better by other means, such as community surveys, just as housing conditions can be studied more appropriately by a survey of housing units rather than by a household survey. The Commission may wish to consider this question further in order that more specific guidance may be available.

C. Regional activities

19. It may be pertinent to note the interest and experience in conducting sample household surveys which have developed since the last meeting of the Commission. Examples of regional activity are set forth below; national activities are described in Sample Surveys of Current Interest (Statistical Papers, Series C, No. 10).

(1) Africa

20. In Africa, a Working Group of Consultants on Household Surveys met in Addis Ababa, 11-20 December 1961, under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Africa. The object of the meeting was to review past and current household surveys in Africa, to clarify the objectives and methods of such inquiries and to

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propose methods of developing survey programmes as part of the regular work of national statistical offices. The meeting was attended by eleven participants from African countries and twelve from international and other agencies. It is anticipated that the observations made by the Group will form the basis of a comprehensive manual of household sample surveys in the light of African conditions; the drafting of the manual will begin in 1962. A report of the Working Group is available as document E/CN.14/130.

(ii) Asia

21. The Conference of Asian Statisticians at its fourth session in Tokyo, Japan, 27 November-8 December 1961, had for discussion a paper entitled "Family living Surveys in the ECAFE Region" (E/CN.11/ASTAT/CONF.4/L.3) which covered not only the limited concept of family living inquiries but also a large variety of other surveys designed to measure the levels of living. The paper was intended to provide background information on the recent development of such family living surveys in the countries of the region, based largely on information submitted by Governments in reply to a secretariat questionnaire, or contained in the draft of the First Annual Report on Sample Surveys in the ECAFE Region (prepared by the Statistics Development Section, ECAFE Secretariat). The methods used in these surveys conducted during the five years ended 1961 were presented in detail.

(iii) Europe

22. An ILO/UN Regional Statistical Seminar on Household Surveys took place in Vienna, Austria, 16-27 October 1961, under the auspices of the International Labour Office and the Conference of European Statisticians. The purpose of the Seminar was the exchange of experience on major operational and administrative aspects of the planning and conducting of household surveys. It was attended by fifty participants from twenty-five member countries of the Economic Commission for Europe.

23. The Working Group on Statistics of Private Consumption Expenditure (including family budget inquiries) has continued to work within the framework of the Conference of European Statisticians. A meeting of this Group will be held in Geneva, 9-13 April 1962.

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III. INTERNATIONAL DEFINITION AND MEASUREMENT
OF LEVELS OF LIVING

24. At the request of the Economic and Social Council [res. 585 B (XX)], a progress report on the development of the measurement of levels of living was presented to the 11th session of the Statistical Commission. The Commission recommended that the Social Commission at its next session might consider whether part I of the report, as revised by the Working Party on Statistics for Social Programmes, had reached a stage where the Secretary-General might be requested to distribute it to States Members of the United Nations for their interim guidance for the measurement of levels of living (E/3375, paragraph 102).

25. At its 13th session, the Social Commission noted with satisfaction the work done in this difficult and important field and commented on the usefulness of the system of components and indicators for measuring social progress both for national purposes and for international comparisons. While realizing many of the shortcomings of the indicators, the Commission also recognized that the process of reaching agreement on specific components and indicators for the measurement of levels of living would be a continuous one (E/3489, paragraph 30). Hence, it concurred in the recommendation of the Statistical Commission, and part I of the report (E/CN.3/270 and Corr.1) was issued in 1961 as International Definition and Measurement of Levels of Living: An Interim Guide (E/CN.3/270/Rev.1).

26. Both the Statistical Commission and the Social Commission stressed the importance of presenting data according to social-economic groupings in addition to national averages and of devising indicators for each major group, as well as the desirability of including selected indicators under the social security component.

27. The importance of continuing to search for internationally comparable indicators under the component concerned with human freedoms was also stressed by the Social Commission; a paper on this topic was prepared for the Working Party on Statistics for Social Programmes, but discussion was deferred until further research could be carried on.

28. Attention is now being given to developing the use of sample household inquiries for obtaining data for use in the measurement of levels of living. These activities are reported in paragraphs 13-23.

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IV. HOUSING STATISTICS (OTHER THAN THE
1960 HOUSING CENSUS PROGRAMME 1/)

A. Development of statistical indicators of housing conditions

29. It will be recalled that at its 11th session, the Statistical Commission had before it a technical report (E/CN.3/R.2) dealing with the development of statistical indicators of the housing component of levels of living. Prior to coming before the Commission at that session, the technical report had been circulated for comment to twenty-four national statistical services, to thirty-six housing experts and to the members of the original Committee of Experts on Levels of Living. The comments received were transmitted to the Commission with the report (E/CN.3/R.2/Add.1)

30. Having considered the report and the comments thereon, and having itself made a number of specific recommendations for additions and revisions, the Statistical Commission at its 11th session proposed that the document, together with the comments of the Commission, be considered again by the Working Party on Social Programmes as well as by regional groups concerned with housing statistics, and that the document might then be revised by the Secretary-General and circulated to the national statistical offices and housing agencies of Member States (E/3375, paragraph 119).

31. Accordingly, the indicators were again studied by the Working Party on Statistics for Social Programmes at its second session in Geneva, 19-23 September 1960. The views of regional groups concerned with housing statistics in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America were sought and, as a result, comments were received from the Working Party on Housing and Building Statistics of the Economic Commission for Europe and from the Inter American Statistical Institute. The document has now been revised to take into account these comments as well as the views of the Statistical Commission and of the

1/ Activities in census-taking are reported in E/CN.3/295. Also in that document (paragraphs 25-27) is a description of a series of seminars on housing statistics and programmes, which is being organized for the benefit of participants from under-developed countries in the various regions.

Working Party on Statistics for Social Programmes. The revised version is being reproduced in English and Spanish as Statistical Indicators of Housing Conditions (Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 37) and is being circulated to national statistical offices and housing agencies, as requested by the Commission.

B. Proposed methods of estimating housing needs

32. Proposed methods of estimating housing needs were considered by the Commission for the first time at its 11th session (E/CN.3/274). Although reservations were expressed concerning some of the concepts and formulae in the document, the Commission after a critical discussion, agreed that development of standard techniques for national measurement of housing needs would be a useful step in many countries and suggested that the study could be utilized in developing objective criteria. The Commission therefore proposed that the document be referred to regional groups concerned with housing statistics for adaptation to regional needs, and that it also be circulated to statistical offices and housing agencies of Member States for their comments (E/3375, paragraph 123). In accordance with this recommendation, the document was circulated to statistical offices, to housing agencies and also to the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East. The comments received are outlined below:

(i) Comments of regional bodies

33. The comments received from regional groups indicate general agreement with the methods proposed and deal mainly with suggested modifications and the need to emphasize certain aspects to meet regional conditions. For example, the comments received from the Economic Commission for Latin America state that the proposed methods are considered suitable for the region but suggest that more emphasis be given to urban migration and its effect on housing needs and to the fact that housing needs are peculiarly a local problem. It is also suggested that the usefulness of housing censuses and continuing or periodic analyses in connexion with estimating housing needs might be stressed.

34. The comments received from the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East state that the methods proposed generally meet the requirements of the urban areas

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in that region. It is pointed out, however, that a large proportion of the people in the region live in rural areas and that some modification of the methods might, therefore, be required, particularly with regard to density of occupation based on the number of persons per room.

35. The Economic Commission for Europe expressed the view that more emphasis should be placed on the factor of household formation in considering future housing requirements, and considered some of the references to population increase misleading. It is also pointed out that the difference between the number of households and the number of dwellings represents the minimum deficit, since households may be expected to split up as more dwellings become available, and that in order to arrive at an estimate of maximum shortage, secondary families in multi-family households should be included in the estimate of the number of households. The concept of net overcrowding mentioned in paragraph 49 of E/CN.3/274 is not considered practical, because it does not take account of the location of the under-occupied and over-occupied dwellings or of their relative cost.

(ii) Country comments

36. Comments on document E/CN.3/274 were also received from seventeen countries. Several of the comments refer to the need to develop methods of estimating housing needs and the value of an exchange of experience at the international level.

37. They suggest that attention be drawn to the fact that housing needs should be estimated for small areas and that national estimates should represent a summation of these estimates. It is also suggested that, in addition to rural/urban migration which has been mentioned in the document, other types of internal migration should be considered in estimating housing needs. It is proposed that more detailed explanations be included concerning the ways in which some of the components of housing needs listed in paragraph 36 of E/CN.3/274, overlap.

38. In connexion with the major components of housing needs shown in paragraph 36, of E/CN.3/274, the comments generally refer to (a)(iii), (b)(i) and (b)(ii), which are dealt with separately below.

(a) The number of dwellings required to reduce the density of occupation [para. 36 (a)(iii)]. Several of the comments draw attention to the fact that, if doubled-up households are eliminated, a high level of density (persons per room) may indicate a need for larger dwellings rather than additional dwellings, and that this need may be met by an increase in the size of dwellings already estimated to meet the needs of doubled-up households, demographic increase, etc. Several objections were received to the concept of net overcrowding, which is considered impractical.

(b) The number of dwellings required to house the population increase at some future date [para. 36 (b)(i)]. It is generally agreed that for the purpose of estimating future housing requirements, more emphasis should be placed on future changes in population composition and less on population increase. It is suggested that more detailed methods be developed for estimating the proportion of various population groups requiring separate dwellings and several comments include suggested methods.

(c) The number of dwellings required to replace those lost from the inventory [para. 36 (b)(ii)]. It is suggested that more study be devoted to the problem of obsolescence. In this connexion, it is stated that age of the dwellings is a doubtful factor on which to base an estimate of the number of dwellings that will be lost from the inventory during a stated period and that maintenance is a more significant factor of dwellings becoming sub-standard. It is also suggested that replacement requirements due to mergers of two or more dwellings be included in the estimate of replacement needs.

39. The Statistical Commission may wish to comment upon the proposals, as well as to consider recommending that the Secretary-General, in consultation with regional groups and taking into account other comments, revise the document and issue it as a provisional technical guide to stimulate further study of the subject.

C. Development of international standards for a system of current housing statistics

40. At its eleventh session, the Commission recommended that work be pursued in development of international standards for current housing statistics, proposals for which had been placed before the Commission in a memorandum

(E/CN.3/275 and Corr.1). The memorandum had described regional activities in

current housing statistics carried out by the ECE Housing Committee and the Inter American Statistical Institute, and the Commission, noting these, recommended that regional programmes be fully considered in the formulation of international standards.

41. Both the Economic Commission for Europe and the Inter American Statistical Institute estimated that their programme of work would require at least two years to complete. Developments to date consist of a draft outline for a European programme of current housing and building statistics, containing suggestions for statistical series which should be published annually.^{2/} No other regional programme has so far materialized, with the result that international consideration of the problem has been held in abeyance.

V. CLASSIFICATION FOR INTERNATIONAL ANALYSIS OF POPULATION BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

42. In considering the potential contents of the Compendium of Social Statistics, the Commission at its eleventh session became aware of the necessity of being able to study the socio-economic structure of countries and of changes in socio-economic segments of the population over time. To meet this need, the Commission recommended [res. 10 (XI)] that the Secretary-General study the nature and uses of socio-economic statistical classifications currently in use in various Member States, with a view to the possibility of achieving greater uniformity in the future.

43. At its thirteenth session, the Social Commission in considering the International Definition and Measurement of Levels of Living, pointed out an important shortcoming in the recommendation of the Committee of Experts that changes in levels of living be measured on the basis of the population as a whole rather than by reference to major social-economic groups within the given population (E/3489, para. 29).

44. In accordance with the directive of the Statistical Commission and the interest of the Social Commission, an examination of the classifications utilized in over 100 population censuses and surveys was made. On the basis

^{2/} HOU/Working Paper No. 120-CONF.EUR.STATS/113.

of the findings, some preliminary suggestions for a socio-economic classification were prepared and placed before the Working Party on Statistics for Social Programmes at its third session in October 1961. The Working Party agreed that it was desirable to have some kind of groupings by broad economic and social categories which would be of value particularly for national purposes in analysing results of household surveys. There was general support for the classification adopted by the Conference of European Statisticians for censuses of population and housing^{3/} but it was felt that this might need to be adapted to regional, national or local circumstances. The consensus was that the subject required further study and that the results of such study should be brought to the attention of the Working Party and other interested bodies at a later date.

45. It is hoped that the projected study of the methodology of population censuses and major surveys taken in connexion with the 1955-1964 World Population Census Programme (E/CN.3/295, para. 9) will make it possible to present to the next session of the Commission a report on the nature and national uses of socio-economic groupings as well as proposal for increasing uniformity.

^{3/} Conference of European Statisticians. Working Group on Censuses of Population and Housing. Report of the third session, 9-14 December 1957. Document Conf.Eur.Stats/WG.6/51, 17 December 1957; and United Nations Handbook of Population Census Methods, Vol. II. Appendix I. (Studies in Methods, Series F, No. 5, Rev.1. New York, 1958).