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DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENT STATISTICS: PATTERNS
OF CONSUMPTION; QUALITATIVE ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT

Development of indicators on patterns of consumption:
qualitative aspects of development

Report of the Secretary-General and the United Nations
Research Institute for Social Development

SUMMARY

The present report has been prepared by the Secretary-General and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development pursuant to the discussion and conclusions of the Statistical Commission at its twenty-fourth session concerning General Assembly resolution 40/179 on patterns of consumption: qualitative aspects of development. The Commission recommended (a) that further work be undertaken on the development of indicators in this field, based on a small number of national case-studies and an inquiry by the Secretariat to Governments to determine their views, and (b) that a progress report on this work be submitted to it at its next session. Section I (paras. 8-19) summarizes work in progress on the case-studies undertaken by UNRISD. Section II (paras. 20-24) summarizes the replies received from Governments in response to the Secretariat's inquiry concerning the development of indicators on patterns of consumption; qualitative aspects of development. Points for discussion and for recommendations to the Economic and Social Council by the Commission are given in section III (para. 25). Annexes I and II present information included in the inquiry sent by the Secretariat to Governments, namely an illustrative list of topics and indicators in the fields covered by General Assembly resolution 40/179 and an indicative list of questions. Annex III lists publications provided by or cited by Governments in their responses to the inquiry.

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INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 40/179, the General Assembly stated that an accurate assessment of the advances in living standards required a reliable measuring instrument consisting of a set of indicators related to living conditions, employment and the circumstances underlying them, and the improvement of basic national statistical programmes and capabilities related to food, clothing, housing, education, health care and necessary social services, and it requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on patterns of consumption and related socio-economic indicators, based on the views of all interested States and on information about the work done so far by relevant bodies in the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

2. A summary of this matter was included in the report of the Secretary-General concerning social statistics and indicators (E/CN.3/1987/16), which was submitted to the Commission at its twenty-fourth session. In concluding its discussion of this matter, the Commission recommended, *inter alia*, that a report setting forth the views of Governments and containing a small number of case-studies or national monographs on the preparation of a basket of indicators in the fields identified in paragraph 2 and the indicative patterns of consumption referred to in paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 40/179, be drawn up by the Secretary-General and the United Nations Research Institute on Social Development (UNRISD), with the support of the Statistical Office and in consultation with other appropriate bodies in the United Nations system, including the World Bank, the regional commissions and other appropriate research organizations, to be considered by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-fifth session, before being submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its 1989 meeting, which would report to the General Assembly on the question. This recommendation was further endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1987/6.

3. Immediately following the twenty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission, the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat began consultations with UNRISD on undertaking a joint project on this topic. Funding for research was secured in January of 1988 and continuing consultations have been maintained to locate appropriate consultants, select countries for case-studies and prepare a sound conceptual framework for the work. Consultants have been selected in India, Kenya and Morocco and case-studies are being developed in full consultation with planning, statistical and sector ministries and offices in each country. The present report describes the work undertaken for the case-studies up to the end of September 1988.

4. At its twenty-fourth session the Statistical Commission also recommended that the Statistical Office should explore the possibility of an in-depth study of the development process itself being prepared so that the indicators would reflect the stages or level of the development (E/CN.3/1987/26, para. 140). This question has been taken up with the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, as suggested by the Commission, and the United Nations University, but so far no sources of funding for work along these lines have been identified.

5. The Assembly's request to the Secretary-General in resolution 40/179 specified that the report to be prepared on patterns of consumption and related socio-economic indicators should take into account views of all interested States. Accordingly, in mid-1988, the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs circulated a letter to Governments inviting their views. The present report summarizes the main points and documentation in the responses received by the Secretariat up to 16 December 1988.

6. The report is divided into three sections. Following the introductory passage giving the background (paras. 1-7), section I summarizes the work undertaken on the three national case-studies (paras. 8-19). Section II summarizes the responses of Governments to the inquiry by the Secretariat on their experience and views in this field, including the information provided on data sources, dissemination and timeliness of socio-economic indicators on patterns of consumption (paras. 20-24). Section III presents points for discussion by the Commission and for its recommendation to the Economic and Social Council (para. 25).

7. The annexes to the present report provide, in annex I, a listing of illustrative fields and series for indicators drawn up by the Statistical Office from the "Handbook on social indicators" (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/49) as a basis for further work on the case-studies and circulated to Governments as part of the Secretariat's inquiry requesting their views; in annex II, an indicative list of questions to Governments prepared by UNRISD and also circulated to Governments as part of the Secretariat's inquiry; and in annex III, a listing of publications and citations concerning socio-economic indicators provided by Governments in responding to the inquiry.

I. NATIONAL CASE-STUDIES

8. Resolution 40/179 specifically identifies the following fields for development of indicators related to patterns of consumption/qualitative aspects of development: employment; food, clothing; housing; education; health care; and necessary social services. The Statistical Office and UNRISD agreed that each case-study should consider (a) appropriate indicators that are or could be derived from existing data sources in the respective countries in these fields; (b) the adequacy of existing data sources to monitor trends in these indicators, biennially and for disaggregation by urban, rural and geographical regions; (c) steps which would be required to fill gaps, ensure reliability in monitoring trends and ensure national and subnational coverage of the entire population; (d) availability and use of currently feasible indicators among users, including national planning authorities, and internationally; and (e) steps that could be taken to improve the situation of (d).

9. As noted in the introduction, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development undertook to carry out several country case-studies in collaboration with the Governments concerned. Funds became available in January 1988. Consultants were recruited for studies in three countries, India, Kenya and Morocco. Contacts were made with the governmental authorities and academic bodies, and case-studies initiated. The three studies are now under way and in so far as preliminary substantive results are available, these are reported below. The study

of Morocco is the furthest advanced. That for India has only recently been started. A full report will be issued on completion of the work.

1. Morocco

10. The consultant, who was already thoroughly familiar with conditions in Morocco, paid two visits to the country from 22 May to 3 June 1988 and from 29 June to 6 July 1988, respectively. The time was spent consulting with local governmental authorities and other experts on how best the purpose of the resolution might be implemented in the specific conditions of Morocco and elsewhere. Conceptual and technical problems were discussed. Interim reports were drafted, including a provisional interview schedule from which it is hoped to derive indicators in the sectors listed above.

11. The draft reports emphasized the importance of measuring and monitoring the quality as well as quantity in living conditions. In line with accepted experience, they distinguished three types of measurements, or indicators:

(a) Of quantity, such as the number of schools or medical services of houses provided;

(b) Of quality, of which examples are measures of the quality of education, for example the available number of teachers and their competence; the competence of medical personnel; or the suitability of houses in the light of national culture and tradition. Although measuring quality, the indicators may be in quantitative form;

(c) Of felt satisfaction, to ensure that the services and goods provided truly represent, to the extent feasible, the wishes of the population.

By way of example, a case was cited of houses having been constructed in a straight row which in one sense met a basic need for housing. However, local tradition required that the houses be built in a circle, around a central space, and there was much dissatisfaction with the arrangement.

12. The reports emphasized the need to monitor the conditions separately of the principal socio-economic categories of population in the country, and a study was carried out specifically to identify these categories. At the same time, this raised the problem of how to define a general or all-purpose list of indicators while still meeting the separate cultural conditions and requirements of local groups. A similar problem arises from the need to cater, in a list of indicators, for specific national, as distinct from international, data requirements. Both universal and culture-specific indicators are required in any list.

13. The reports re-emphasized the need to base the data required for monitoring on existing or readily established and, as far as possible, low-cost, data sources. Data on social conditions should be integrated with economic and structural data in the collection, processing and analysis phases.

14. The reports listed some of the political problems in setting up a monitoring system on social conditions: for example, the findings might reveal a situation which until then it had been thought preferable not to divulge, or perhaps they might be used or misused by political opponents.

15. As noted, the authors of the reports have attempted to compile a list of questions for inclusion in an interview schedule in surveys of social conditions, and of corresponding indicators. This work is still under way, given the very considerable technical problems of defining valid and reliable indicators and matching survey questions on many of the qualitative (as well as quantitative) aspects of social development.

2. Kenya

16. A consultant, formerly resident in Kenya, was recruited by UNRISD. Her interim report is based on extensive discussion with producers and users of statistics in Kenya. It suggests that "Kenya has an impressive record in the collection of data on consumption patterns and living conditions. There have been notable achievements in producing these data on a timely and widely accessible basis". In evidence, the interim report contains a list of the data produced notably by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) and other offices in Kenya. National household sample surveys have played an important role. The National Integrated Sample Survey Programme, organized by CBS in the 1970s, was followed by the National Sample Survey and Evaluation programmes. Recent emphasis in survey work has been on disaggregation of data down to district level.

17. The interim Kenya country case-study report has dealt particularly with institutional aspects of monitoring. It raises the question of the use made of the data, i.e. how potentially valuable information might be best disseminated so as to reach the widest possible audience: this is a problem in many countries. The role of CBS in the overall government framework is also discussed. The report suggests that more attention be given to the co-ordination of the many existing sources of data to provide a fully comprehensive and integrated statement on living conditions. The value of political support of data collection is mentioned. The report affirms that there is considerable political support at the very highest levels in Kenya for policies that have the potential for improving the living conditions and consumption patterns of the majority of the population, as well as widespread support in the civil service; but it questions whether statistics are seen to be important in order to achieve this. Statistics are costly to produce and not always easy to use effectively. People may like to quote statistics if they are available, but they may hesitate when it comes to allocating resources to their improvement. International donor agencies are seen as playing a major role in influencing the level of funding.

18. As noted, the report mentions the unusually ambitious data collection programme of CBS which is said to provide an example generally and to raise aspirations that others might wish to embrace. At the same time, the report broaches the question of the optimal balance between collection on the one hand, and processing, analysis, report writing and dissemination of results, on the other hand. This is again a problem common to many countries; data collection may for a

time run ahead of the other phases in statistical work, as a result of which potentially useful information may be under-utilized. The interim report makes suggestions as to how this imbalance might be overcome in particular instances in Kenya.

3. India

19. The Indian country case-study was started only recently. No information was available at the time the present report was prepared.

II. VIEWS OF GOVERNMENTS

20. The letter circulated to Governments in 1988 concerning the development of indicators on patterns of consumption and qualitative aspects of development, provided an illustrative list of series and classifications for indicators (annex I), prepared by the Statistical Office from the United Nations Handbook on Social Indicators; and an indicative list of questions, prepared by UNRISD (see annex II).

21. Up to 16 December 1988, substantive replies or copies of publications were received from the Governments of Australia, Austria, Democratic Yemen, Finland, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Japan, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

22. Most Governments that responded limited their replies to information drawn from available data and publications in their countries. In eight cases the replies were prepared by the national statistical office of the country. This information is summarized in the present section and the publications cited are listed in annex III. Responses to the other issues raised in the indicative questions included the following information:

(a) Two countries reported there were no indicative guidelines of desirable living standards and consumption patterns for the country. No other Government commented specifically on this point;

(b) Two countries reported the following identification of disadvantaged groups in statistics: one-parent families, pensioners and persons living in depressed geographical areas (as mainly identified through employment and unemployment statistics);

(c) Four countries reported the use of their social statistics and indicators to monitor time trends, either annually through their household surveys or decennially through their population and housing censuses;

(d) Two countries reported an interest in achieving greater geographical breakdown in their survey series;

(e) On the questions of use and analysis, two countries reported that available social statistics and indicators were extensively used in planning and

policy-making. In one case this was based on a very close relation with ministries, as survey data were collected only in response to specific user requests.

23. Governments listed the following general and specific data sources for the series indicated in the inquiry circulated by the Secretariat as relevant to indicators on patterns of consumption and qualitative indicators of development:

Austria: Administrative systems; decennial population and housing census; microcensus household survey (quarterly);

Greece: Housing census, labour force survey, household budget survey, educational institutions;

United Kingdom: Administrative systems; decennial census of population and housing; Family Expenditure Survey; General Household Survey; National Food Survey; and Labour Force Survey. The surveys are all annual: all of the basic survey reports are published within one year of completion of data collection except the General Household Survey reports, where the period is 18 months.

24. Most of the Governments responding to the inquiry provided copies or references to their publications on social indicators, survey or census results or general statistical compendiums. These are listed in annex III.

III. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

25. The Commission may wish to:

(a) Discuss the scope and objectives of indicators on patterns of consumption and qualitative aspects of development, taking into account the results of work undertaken to date by UNRISD on national case-studies and the views of Governments responding to the United Nations inquiry pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/179;

(b) Comment on the suitability of the statistical series under consideration by UNRISD and the Statistical Office to measure patterns of consumption and qualitative aspects of development pursuant to resolution 40/179;

(c) Discuss sources of data and suggest ways of improving their relevance, availability and usefulness at national and international levels for measuring patterns of consumption and qualitative aspects of development, pursuant to resolution 40/179, particularly in relation to developing countries;

(d) Recommend to the Economic and Social Council that UNRISD and the Statistical Office continue to collaborate in the completion of the national case-studies and analysis of the views of States, taking into account the comments of the Commission at its present session, and submit a final report and recommendations to the Statistical Commission at its next session, for consideration by the Economic and Social Council.

Annex I

ILLUSTRATIVE LIST OF SERIES AND CLASSIFICATIONS FOR INDICATORS a/

(Asterisks (*) mark items for which data should be prepared
 at least annually)

A. Employment

Priority in
 least developed
 countries

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. *Employment, unemployment and underemployment: urban, rural, geographical areas, major cities, age groups and sex | X |
| 2. Employment by status in employment and informal sector: major cities, regions, urban, rural, sex | |
| 3. Time spent in household duties outside SNA production boundary: age group, sex, urban, rural | |
| 4. *Wages and salaries: industry, sex, urban, rural | |
| 5. Households and population in households operating unincorporated household enterprises: industry, urban, rural | |
| 6. *Household income from unincorporated household enterprises: industry, urban, rural | X |

B. Food, clothing, housing

- | | |
|---|---|
| 7. *Food production and consumption: urban, rural, nutritional adequacy | X |
| 8. Clothing production and consumption and household consumption expenditure: urban, rural; estimated level of consumption at "poverty line" and percentage of population and households below poverty line | |
| 9. Housing characteristics, urban, rural: | |
| 9.1 Number and size of households; number and size of rooms per dwelling and per household | |
| 9.2 Access to appropriate water and sanitation facilities | X |
| 9.3 Access to appropriate sources of energy for lighting, heating and cooking | X |

/...

Priority in
least developed
countries

9.4 Minimal ("poverty line") standards of building materials (e.g. for roof and outer walls) and percentage of housing below this standard

9.5 Access to transport for work, school and health services, household duties, leisure

X

10. *Housing construction:

10.1 Number and size of rooms per dwelling

10.2 Access to appropriate water, sanitation and energy facilities and services

10.3 Meeting minimal standards of building materials

10.4 Access to transport

C. Education and health care

11. *School enrolment ratios at first and second levels: , by age group and sex, urban, rural or other appropriate geographical classification

X b/

12. *Rates of completion at first and second levels: by sex, urban, rural or other appropriate geographical classification

X b/

13. Literacy and educational attainment rates by level: age group, sex, urban, rural, and expected literacy and attainment projections under current patterns of enrolment and completion

X b/

14. Vocational education at the second level: by sex

15. Mortality rates: by age group (including infant and perinatal mortality), major causes or groups of causes, sex, urban, rural or other appropriate geographical classification

X

16. Provision, access and use of primary health care services (World Health Organization (WHO) to be consulted): by sex where appropriate

X

17. Prevalence of selected disabilities, by urban, rural, age group and sex

Priority in
least developed
countries

D. Other necessary social services

18. Services and facilities for disabled persons: by sex, including community-based rehabilitation
19. *Income support for elderly
20. Personnel: by sex, and national expenditures in law enforcement and criminal justice sector
21. Services and facilities for juvenile and youth criminal offenders: by sex

a/ All monetary series should be in current and constant prices.

b/ Priority at first level only.

Annex II

INDICATIVE LIST OF QUESTIONS TO GOVERNMENTS

1. Do indicative guidelines of current and desirable living standards and patterns of consumption for the country exist and influence policy in these fields? a/ What are the implications for economic and social development policies and strategies?
2. What factual information, from whatever sources, is currently available on indicators related to living conditions and patterns of consumption in your country in these fields and how is it disseminated? What is the delay from the period of data collection to dissemination of data?
3. To what extent and in what way are disadvantaged categories of population or backward urban and rural areas identified?
4. To what extent are data collected over time so as to permit monitoring and trend analysis? With what frequency?
5. What improvements of information for what indicators appear most urgent at this time? In this regard, what are the main problems and obstacles (cost, lack of personnel, political difficulties etc.)?
6. How is information on living conditions and patterns of consumption in these fields used? Are there arrangements for systematic analysis of such data, including analysis of emerging trends and problems?

a/ The fields referred to in resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council are: employment; food; clothing; housing; education; health care; and necessary social services.

Annex III

PUBLICATIONS CITED BY GOVERNMENTS

<u>Country</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Issuing office</u>	<u>Date of issue</u>	<u>No. of pages</u>
Austria	<u>Austria and Czechoslovakia: a socio-demographic comparison</u>	Austrian Central Statistical Office and Federal Statistical Office of Czechoslovakia	1987	67
	<u>Social Statistical Data, 1986, vol. 801 (in German)</u>	Austrian Central Statistical Office	1986	460
	<u>Indicators for Economic Development, vol. 523 (in German)</u>	Austrian Central Statistical Office	1979	119
	Statistical report (in German)	Austrian Central Statistical Office	1988	32
Canada	<u>General Social Survey: Features and Status Report</u>	Statistics Canada	1988	8
	<u>Health and Social Support, 1985; General Social Survey, Analysis Series, No. 1</u>	Statistics Canada	1987	232
Federal Rep. of Germany	<u>Data on Health Services, vol. 157 (in German)</u>	Ministry for Youth, Family Women and Health	1987	352
	Nutritional report 1984 (in German)	Office of Nutrition, Frankfurt	1984	256
	Basic structural data 1986/87 (in German)	Federal Ministry of Education and Science	1986	127
	Facts about Germany	Lexikon-Institut, Bertelsmann	1985	416
	The Nutrition Report 1984	German Society of Nutrition	1985	8
Japan	Social indicators, by prefecture (Japanese and English)	Statistics Bureau	1987	560
New Zealand	<u>New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 1981, vol. 12; Population Perspectives '81: General Report</u>	Department of Statistics	1985	193

<u>Country</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Issuing office</u>	<u>Date of issue</u>	<u>No. of pages</u>
Qatar	Household expenditure survey, 1982-83 for Al-Doha (capital) and suburbs (in Arabic)	Central Statistical Organization	1984	300
Sweden	<u>Evolution of Social Welfare</u>	The Swedish Institute	1986	80
	<u>Inequality in Sweden: Trends and Current Situation; Living Conditions 1975-1985, report No. 58</u>	Statistics Sweden	1988	512
United Kingdom	<u>Regional Trends</u>	Central Statistical Office	1981	188
	<u>Social Trends, 1985 edition</u>	Central Statistical Office	1985	208
	<u>General Household Survey, 1978 series</u>	Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, Social Survey Division	1980	208
	<u>Family Expenditure Survey, 1978</u>	Department of Employment and Central Statistical Office	1979	172