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INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATIONS

Progress of work on the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE)

Report of the International Labour Office

SUMMARY

The report provides an overview of the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE) and national practices in censuses and surveys to date (paras. 3-10). The uses of this classification and the active population covered by it are described (paras. 11-15). The possible conceptual basis for a revised and expanded ICSE is discussed in detail (paras. 16-27), and ideas are presented for defining status in employment and delineating categories and subcategories of ICSE, including the treatment of borderline groups (paras. 28-40). Some issues in implementing the classification and future work are also outlined (paras. 41-44). Points for discussion by the Commission are included (para. 45).

* E/CN.3/1991/1 and Corr.1.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The main issues concerning a possible revision and expansion of the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE) were outlined in the previous report on this question (E/CN.3/1989/9), which was submitted to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-fifth session. They include the following:

(a) ICSE lacks a clear conceptual basis, that is, it is not clear what the categories of the classification are supposed to measure, making it difficult to fit non-standard forms of employment into the classification;

(b) The borderlines between the main groups of employees, employers, own-account workers, unpaid family workers and members of producers' co-operatives are not clearly defined, partly as a consequence of (a);

(c) ICSE does not give subdivisions of the main categories, which would make it possible (i) to distinguish between subgroups within the main groups; and (ii) to create aggregate categories with dividing lines different from those of ICSE. Users have indicated that both (i) and (ii) are serious limitations of the classification;

(d) Any revised and expanded ICSE would probably become more complex to implement properly and in its entirety than the present one because more questions would be needed to achieve the goals of (i) improved data quality by reducing the fuzziness of borderlines and (ii) more details.

In addition, it has been strongly argued that, for the situation in developing countries, the validity of the present ICSE groups is very limited, at least partly because of the shortcomings outlined under (a) to (c) above. 1/

2. In the light of the extensive discussion at the twenty-fifth session, the present paper summarizes the arguments contained in the previous report (E/CN.3/1989/9) and presents a number of preliminary suggestions based on the work that has been carried out since 1989. The suggestions presented here are based on the conceptual basis proposed in the previous paper. They are not intended to represent a complete proposal for a revised and expanded ICSE. Such a proposal can only be put together after further work, including discussions on the suggestions presented here. The work with ICSE is being co-ordinated with the work carried out by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) for developing guidelines for the measurement of employment in the informal sector and with related work in the revision of the System of National Accounts (SNA).

I. THE INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF STATUS IN EMPLOYMENT (ICSE)

3. The International Classification of Status in Employment comprises the following substantive groups:

(a) Employer. A person who operates his or her own economic enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade, and hires one or more employees. Some countries may wish to distinguish among employers according to the number of persons they employ;

(b) Own-account worker. A person who operates his or her own economic enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade, and hires no employees;

(c) Employee. A person who works for a public or private employer and receives remuneration in wages, salary, commission, tips, piece-rates or pay in kind;

(d) Unpaid family worker. Usually a person who works without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a related person living in the same household. Where it is customary for young persons, in particular, to work without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a related person who does not live in the same household, the requirement of "living in the same household" may be eliminated. If there are a significant number of unpaid family workers in enterprises of which the operators are members of a producers' co-operative who are classified in category (e) below, these unpaid family workers should be classified in a separate subgroup;

(e) Member of producers' co-operative. A person who is an active member of a producers' co-operative, regardless of the industry in which it is established. Where this group is not numerically important, it may be excluded from the classification and members of producers' co-operatives should be classified under other headings, as appropriate.

In addition, the following residual group is recommended:

(f) Persons not classifiable by status. Experienced workers whose status is unknown or inadequately described and unemployed persons not previously employed (i.e., new entrants). A separate group for new entrants may be included if information for this group is not already available elsewhere. 2/

It is further indicated that countries may wish to subdivide one or more of the above ICSE categories in the light of their specific needs and circumstances. Particular reference is made to the category of employees, which may be subdivided into private sector employees and public sector employees. It is also specified that countries requiring data on apprentices may include apprentices (if they are to be considered as economically active) as a subcategory under the major category of employees. Finally, attention is drawn to the fact that members of the armed forces, if included in the statistics, should be classified among the category of

employees. No further guidance is given on the conceptual basis for ICSE or on the definitions of its component groups.

4. In addition, it should be noted that the recommendations concerning the statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment, adopted by the thirteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, imply a set of rules for consolidating the five substantive groups into two groups: employers, own-account workers and members of producers' co-operatives should be considered as in self-employment, and unpaid family workers at work should be considered as in self-employment. This means that groups (a), (b), (d) and (e) may be said to form one group, with (c) "employee" forming the other. It should be noted that in the present report the term "self-employed" is used to indicate the combination of groups (a) and (b).

II. BACKGROUND AND NATIONAL PRACTICES

5. The first international step towards a classification of workers by status in employment was taken in 1938 by the Committee of Statistical Experts of the League of Nations. 3/ The Committee recommended the following classification of "personal status" of the gainfully occupied population, in addition to classification by occupation and industry: (a) employers (persons working on their own account with paid assistants in their occupation); (b) persons working on their own account either alone or with the assistance of members of their families; (c) members of families aiding the head of their families in his occupation; and (d) persons in receipt of salaries or wages.

6. The Sixth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, in 1947, in its resolution concerning statistics of employment, unemployment and the labour force, recommended that such statistics include the following groups: (a) workers for public or private employers, (b) employers, (c) workers who work on their own account without employees and (d) unpaid family workers. In 1948 the Population Commission of the United Nations recommended that, in censuses, the economically active population be classified according to status into these status in employment groups, and in 1950 it adopted standard definitions for them.

7. In 1957, the Ninth International Conference of Labour Statisticians had before it a detailed report recommending important subdivisions to the main groups of the classification. However, the Conference did not agree on the proposed conceptual basis for ICSE or the proposed subdivisions. Agreement was, however, reached concerning the usefulness of adding a group covering "members of co-operative production units" to the four existing groups. "Members of producers' co-operatives" was then added in the recommendations concerning population censuses approved by the Statistical Commission of the United Nations in 1958. Since then only minor editorial revisions to the descriptions of the groups constituting the classification have been made. The draft resolution prepared for, but not adopted by, the Ninth Conference, in 1957, still contains the most detailed descriptions available of the five substantive groups in ICSE. 4/

8. The Expert Group on the 1990 Round of Population Censuses, meeting in November 1985, recommended that no changes should be made to the classification outlined in paragraph 3 above, but that it should be recognized that countries might wish to specify "apprentices" as a subgroup of "employees". Consequently, ICSE has been left virtually unchanged for 30 to 40 years.

9. At least three of the first four major groups contained in the international recommendations have been used by almost all countries in their population censuses and labour force surveys during the past three decades or more. Only 12 of the 127 countries described in the ILO publication Total and Economically Active Population, Employment and Unemployment (Population Censuses) 5/ did not include a status-in-employment variable in their last census before 1989. (No information was available for six countries.) The 72 labour force surveys described in Economically Active Population, Employment, Unemployment and Hours of Work (Household Surveys) 6/ include a status-in-employment variable. The number of groups actually used by countries range from 2 to 15 in the censuses and from 2 to 46 (Austria) in the labour force surveys. Typically, 5 to 10 groups are defined, some of which refer to persons outside the labour force. Distinctions are frequently made through the use of, or aggregated versions of, other variables, such as "institutional sector" (i.e. government/non-government), "occupation" or "industry". To what extent these other variables are used as proxies to approximate distinctions in the underlying status-in-employment variable, which cannot easily be made more directly, is hardly ever discussed. However, it seems likely that the reasoning behind their introduction often is something like the following: "The contractual situation for 'farm workers' (or 'government employees of category X') is normally so different from that of other employees that a distinction should be made in the status-in-employment classification."

10. The Expert Group on the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme, which met in New York from 11 to 15 November 1985, concluded that "ISIC, ISCO and ISCE must be clearly defined and their classification principles and criteria must be distinct and not overlapping". 7/ It is hoped that the present report will contribute to that objective, as far as ICSE is concerned, as well as to ways in which they can be fruitfully used together to develop tabulation categories needed by the users of statistics on the economically active population.

III. WHY MEASURE "STATUS IN EMPLOYMENT"?

11. As stated in the report prepared for the Ninth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, in 1957:

> "It is principally to supplement the information necessary for the study of the economic and social structure of the labour force that various countries establish statistics on the distribution of labour according to status." 8/

It was recognized that, in addition to being used to provide the number of workers by status-in-employment category, the status-in-employment variable would also be used as a background variable for statistical descriptions of workers' behaviour and their conditions of work and living. The variable also serves as a component

in the definition of "socio-economic groups" or "social class", variables that are often thought to be more valid for the description and analysis of social structures and behaviour than the status-in-employment variable on its own, even though researchers and analysts have not managed to agree on their precise definitions.

12. The interest in data on status-in-employment groups as such has increased noticeably in recent years as several developments have led many observers to question the numerical dominance of the situations seen as "standard" 9/ for own-account workers and "standard" for employees with respect to employment status, or at least to the expectation that employment in the exceptions to these "standard" situations is increasing sharply. This has been recognized for a long time in studies dealing with developing countries and has resulted in a large number of studies of tenancy systems and other contractual relationships regulating the work situation of the population in these countries. However, this work seems to have influenced the tools of official statistics only to a very limited extent. Concern whether new jobs in industrialized countries are "as good as" or "worse than" existing ones, and whether, to a larger extent than before, they will be, or should be, in the form of self-employment, underlies the increase in interest concerning the status-in-employment variable in such countries. These concerns are discussed, from the point of view of labour legislation, by E. Cordova. 10/

IV. UNITS TO BE CLASSIFIED BY THE STATUS IN EMPLOYMENT VARIABLE AND REFERENCE PERIOD

13. With respect to national practices, some countries classify only the employed population by status-in-employment group, while others classify the entire economically active population. A number of countries have also included categories for persons outside the labour force (such as "students", "housewives", "pensioners") under the heading "status in employment" (although these may more properly be regarded as "reasons for non-employment"). In the report prepared for the Ninth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, it is concluded that "status in employment" means "the status of the individual in respect of his employment" (emphasis added). 11/ Similarly, in another report on ICSE, it is stated that ICSE applies to "the position of the individual in respect of his or her job". 12/ This would mean that ICSE should apply only to employed persons. As stated in Supplementary Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses,

> "Status in employment refers to the status of an economically active person with respect to his or her employment, that is, whether he or she is employed (or was, if unemployed) ... during the time reference period established for data on economic characteristics" (emphasis added). 13/ Thus, existing international recommendations clearly state that the status-in-employment variable relates to the present or past employment of persons."

14. However, a worker may have more than one job during the reference period and, as a consequence, work as an "employee" in one job and "own account worker" in

another. This means that, just as with occupation and industry, persons must be classified to a specific status-in-employment group on the basis of their relationship to a job - past, present or future. Multiple job holders may therefore have several statuses in employment, and it is necessary to have rules for selecting the "primary status" of persons and/or rules for defining multiple-status groups. The design of such rules will be important for those users who are primarily interested in persons as the unit of observation and analysis.

15. The primary unit classified by ICSE should therefore be the job, and a person should be classified to an ICSE group through his/her relationship to a job. For employed persons with more than one job in the reference period, the ICSE group should be determined by the same job used to classify them by industry and occupation. (There may be a need for well-defined rules to define multiple status categories.) The reference period to be used to determine status-in-employment category should be the same as that used to determine employment status. Non-employed persons may be classified by reference to a past or future job as appropriate. (It should be noted that, for convenience, the terminology used in the following as well as in the previous paragraphs imply that there is a one-to-one relationship between jobs and persons.)

V. WHAT SHOULD THE STATUS-IN-EMPLOYMENT VARIABLE AND ICSE MEASURE?

16. In the context of international statistical co-operation there has been no in-depth discussion of the issues mentioned in paragraph 3 above since the Ninth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, in 1957. Proposals relating to subparagraphs 3 (a) and 3 (c) were discussed at that Conference but agreement could not be reached. It is disquieting to note that there is so little explicit agreement concerning what the status-in-employment variable is measuring, despite its widespread use in official statistics. However, this need not lead to rejection of its validity. It is presumed that there was a valid intuitive understanding of the climate and also of methods for indicating differences in climate before reaching a correct understanding of the nature of such differences. However, proposals for changing or extending the present ICSE, that is, proposals for dealing with the issues set out in subparagraphs 1 (b) and 1 (c) should preferably be based on a clear understanding of what is to be measured and the use to be made of the status-in-employment variable.

17. In the report prepared for the Ninth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, it is stated that:

> "The distinction between the four major groups recommended by the various international agencies, and actually used in most countries, appears to be based on two main criteria: the position of each individual to that of other persons and the mode of remuneration of the work. ... Any classification of individuals according to status will have to be based mainly on these two criteria." 14/

However, from the discussion contained in the report of ILO following the Conference, it is clear that this understanding of status in employment did not receive the support of the Confernce. 15/ The Conference adopted neither the proposal by the secretariat concerning a general statement on the basis for the classification, nor the proposals for further subdivision of the major groups - proposals that were based on the above understanding of the status-in-employment variable. According to the report on the Conference "agreement was far from complete as to the basis on which a classification according to status should be established, and ... the determination of such a basis would be particularly arduous in view of the great differences in the approach of the various countries to this problem." 16/

18. The report does not specify why agreement could not be reached, since a definition of status in terms of the type of payment received for work performed was supported during the discussion as was the use of a status criterion based on the relationship of a person in his job to the enterprise or establishment within which the job is performed. The main problem seems to have been that these two criteria were regarded as mutually exclusive and not as complementary, representing two different, but closely related, dimensions of the underlying variable, as was suggested by the secretariat.

19. All countries using a status-in-employment variable in their Population censuses or labour force surveys distinguish between "own-account worker" and "employee". (Some combine "own-account worker" and "employer" with "self-employed".) To understand the difference between "own-account workers" and "employees", therefore, seems basic to an understanding of what the status-in-employment variable is to measure. It is therefore necessary to answer the question: "What is the difference between, on the one hand, an 'own-account worker' who produces and sells goods (or services) to one or more customers, and on the other hand, an 'employee' who sells labour to an employer, to be used for the production and sale of goods or services?" To answer this question, it may be useful to have a closer look at (a) the main features of the employment situations representing the core or the essence of these two groups and (b) the departures from these situations, which seem to be most important for this discussion.

20. The core "employee" situations are those in which the workers are:

(a) Working full time for one employer (i.e., another person or an establishment);

(b) Working at a place of work where the employer is responsible and has authority;

(c) Working at hours determined by the employer;

(d) Working with raw materials, other inputs and means of production provided by the employer;

(e) Remunerated by a wage or salary;

(f) Taking instructions from the employer;

(g) Having an individual explicit or implicit contract or agreement of employment with the employer;

(h) Expecting to go on working for the employer until reaching a specified age, unless the relationship is terminated by either party following certain agreed or specified procedures.

This is the framework within which labour law, collective bargaining and social security systems developed, to specify workers' rights and obligations in relation to the employer and the State.

21. The core "own-account worker" situations are those in which the workers are:

(a) Working alone full time as professionals or craftsmen producing goods or services for sale to others;

(b) Working at a place of work where they are responsible and have authority;

(c) Working at hours determined by themselves;

(d) Owning or renting the means of production, having purchased raw materials and other inputs;

(e) Remunerated by the profits of the sale of the produced goods and services;

(f) Taking instructions only from purchasers of the goods and services produced;

(g) Selling the goods and services to a large number of customers or to the same customer only for a limited period.

22. Comparing these descriptions with the ICSE definitions shows that the core groups do not correspond exactly to any ICSE groups (or combinations of such groups). A desirable feature of a revised ICSE may be the possibility of identifying those belonging to the core groups by using ICSE categories - alone or in combination with other variables commonly included in population censuses or labour force surveys.

23. Some of the more important departures from the core employee situations are the following:

(a) Some (persons commonly regarded as) "employees" regularly work less than full time over the day, week or month for the same employer and/or may regularly have more than one employer;

(b) Some "employees" work at home or at another place outside the employer's responsibility and authority (e.g., "home workers" and workers placed through temporary work agencies or seconded);

(c) Some "employees" work at hours set by themselves - within certain limits;

(d) Some "employees" work with raw materials, other inputs or means of production which they (partly) have to provide themselves (e.g., "home workers");

(e) Some "employees" are remunerated partly or wholly in kind or by tips, commissions or profit-sharing;

(f) Some "employees" are not instructed by their employer but by third parties (e.g., by the user of workers placed through temporary work agencies or seconded);

(g) Some "employees" have a contract or agreement with the employer only as members of a group (e.g., members of work gangs);

(h) (i) Some "employees" have employment contracts or agreements only for a limited, specified period - contracts that may or may not be renewed (e.g., workers on short-term contracts, seasonal workers, casual workers, workers on call); (ii) some contracts or agreements of employment can be terminated before time only by the employer (extreme cases include slaves and bonded labour).

Explicit or implicit contracts involving departures from the core employee situation will be entered into by the employer to reduce direct and indirect labour costs, to increase work efficiency, to increase flexibility of operation, to increase control of workers and/or to reduce obligations to the employees that the employer would have had if the work contract had been in accordance with the core situation regulated by labour law. Employees will enter into employment contracts with departures from the core situation in order to have less time committed to work or greater flexibility in their work situation, to obtain higher remuneration and/or because they feel that they have no choice.

24. Some of the more important departures from the core own-account worker situations are the following:

(a) (i) The workers are not professionals or craftsmen but have some other skilled or unskilled occupations (e.g., as farmers, drivers, itinerant handicraft workers and salespersons); (ii) the workers do not work alone, but with others on an equal basis (e.g., as partners, members of producers' co-operatives);

(b) The workers work at a place of work where the customer is responsible and has authority;

(c) The hours of work are determined by the customer/client;

(d) The terms of rental of means of production and/or the terms for financing purchases of raw materials and other inputs restrict the operation and work (e.g., franchises, sharecroppers, tenant-holders);

(e) The products and proceeds of sales are shared with others, because of contractual obligations following from (d), or as part of partnership/co-operative agreements;

(f) Instructions have to be taken from the owners of the means of production or the providers of raw materials and other inputs, following from (d) (e.g., franchises, sharecroppers);

(g) The goods and services produced are sold to only one customer and/or are subject to conditions imposed by commitments following from (d).

25. The main differences between the core situations outlined in paragraphs 20 and 21 above are related to (a) the type and extent of economic risk carried by the worker and (b) the extent and type of control of the work and the enterprise exercised by the worker. The departures from the core situations seem to increase the risks carried by the "employee" and reduce the control of the "own-account worker". When present alone or in combination, the departures tend to blur the distinction between the two core situations. There is therefore a need to find a criterion, or a set of criteria, that can be used to determine whether a particular work situation represents that of an own-account worker or that of an employee, and for subdividing the two groups further. If the above observations are basically correct, then (a) "economic risk" and (b) "control" would seem to be the appropriate criteria.

26. To implement distinctions based on "economic risk", it is necessary to find indicators of risk involvement. One possibility consistent with the concept of "own-account work" would be to link the distinction between risk categories to means of remuneration, for example, to distinguish on the one hand between situations in which the remuneration of the worker is totally dependent on the returns from the sale of the products or services being produced and, on the other, situations in which part of the remuneration is determined on the basis of time worked or amount produced but otherwise independent of the receipts or profits from sales.

27. To implement distinctions based on "control", it is necessary to establish more precisely what it meant by "control", the relevant areas of control (place of work; means of production, raw materials and other inputs; and output) and the relevant types and degree of control (legal, financial, cultural).

VI. PROPOSAL FOR A DEFINITION OF THE STATUS-IN-EMPLOYMENT VARIABLE

28. Based on the discussion in the previous sections, the following definition of the status-in-employment variable is proposed:

> The status-in-employment variable is designed to describe jobs in terms of how they are related to economic units and economic risks through different types of control and dependence relationships, as reflected (a) by systems of pay and remuneration and (b) in written or oral contracts determining conditions of employment and ownership and use of means of production and raw materials.

The following sections will use this definition to discuss and propose distinctions to be made between various types of status-in-employment categories, before

discussing issues related to the implementation of a revised and expanded status-in-employment variable in statistical censuses and surveys.

VII. CATEGORIES OF THE STATUS-IN-EMPLOYMENT VARIABLE

29. The present section will discuss problems of defining the delineation of various categories for the status-in-employment variable. At this stage, the discussion is not intended to be exhaustive or to represent a complete presentation of a revised and expanded ICSE (i.e., a RE/ICSE). Problems of implementing the delineations of the various categories in actual data collections will be discussed.

A. Borderline between "own-account workers" and "employees"

30. As discussed in paragraph 19, all countries make a distinction between "own-account workers" (or "self-employed workers") and "employees", and to understand the difference between the two categories seems basic to the understanding of the status-in-employment variable. It also seems reasonable to take as the starting point the definitions for these categories already used by ICSE. However, the borderline between the two categories should be defined more precisely, both by expanding the definitions in terms of the definition of the status-in-employment variable itself, and by identifying special borderline categories and specifying where to include them in the RE/ICSE. By identifying borderline categories separately, there is also the possibility of regrouping them for particular descriptive or analytical purposes.

31. According to the present ISCE definitions an "employee ... works for a public or private employer and receives remuneration in wages, salary, commission, tips, piece-rates or pay in kind", while an "own-account worker ... operates his or her own economic enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade". This difference should be clarified mainly with reference to the economic risk carried by the worker, as expressed by means of remuneration and duration of contract.

32. For remuneration of the worker, this can be achieved by linking it to the extent to which it depends upon the returns from the sale of the products or services being produced, or is determined on the basis of time worked or amount produced, but otherwise is independent of the receipts or profits from sales. One possibility would be to define "employees" as those who get their entire remuneration on a "time worked" and/or "amount produced" basis, while everyone whose remuneration depends to some extent upon profits or actual sales should be classified as "own-account worker". However, the prevalence of payment schemes that combine time or piece-rates with commissions, tips and/or profit-sharing does indicate that the dividing line must be complicated (or flexible). Economic risk associated with the basic livelihood of a worker is in some sense "more important" than risk associated with income that comes on top of a basic level of remuneration, and therefore the suggestion is to link the dividing line between "employee" and "own-account worker" to whether or not a certain minimum remuneration is in the form of time or piece-rates, independent of sales or profits. How to determine this "minimum remuneration" then becomes an important

question. One solution could be to link this minimum remuneration to a minimum statutory wage rate, where this exists, or to the average wage rate, for example by saying that the minimum remuneration should be equivalent to whichever is the highest of the minimum statutory wage rate or one third (one half) of the average wage rate.

B. Casual workers

33. The economic risk of a worker is determined not only by the basis for the remuneration but also by how long, in practice, the present income-generating activity will continue before he or she has to start looking for a new one, i.e., with a new employer, a new client or a new customer. A "wage-type" remuneration that can only be counted on for a day or a week does not represent less economic risk than the income from service rendered that an "own-account" professional might receive from one or a few clients. It is therefore suggested that the RE/ICSE should identify separately persons who receive a "wage-type" remuneration but whose actual contracts (engagements) with the employer are of such a short duration, say two weeks or less, that it may be warranted to group them with "own-account workers" in some contexts.

C. Borderline between "employees" and "own-account subcontractors"

34. Some "own-account workers", for example certain professionals or crafts-workers, may in some cases be engaged for specific assignments where they will be working for the same client or customer for a prolonged period, at the premises of the client, using equipment and raw material provided by the client and being paid a compensation calculated on the basis of the estimated amount of time the assignment will take, with the possibility of renegotiating the compensation if the estimate proves to have been incorrect. It is suggested that such "own-account workers" are, from the point of view of the RE/ICSE, equivalent to "employees" and should be classified as such whenever possible.

D. Borderline between "own-account workers" and "employers"

35. The only difference between an "own-account worker" and an "employer", according to ICSE, is that the latter "hires one or more employees". There would seem to be a need to establish a more precise meaning of this criterion. Should the definition of "employer" refer to the situation that exists in the reference period, or to some "normal" or "regular" situation? What is meant by "regular" in this context? If reference is made to the actual situation in the reference period and the self-employed worker has had employees for part of the period, then some kind of priority rule must be applied - either an absolute one or one based on the duration of the contract. Many self-employed workers have only other household members working for them regularly, but they may engage casual workers, own-account workers, persons employed by temporary work agencies or seconded from other employers, for limited periods of time or for specific tasks, without entering into an employment contract with such workers. It is suggested that the RE/ICSE should

define an "employer" as a self-employed worker who has hired an "employee" (in the sense of the RE/ICSE) for any part of the reference period, and that "hiring" in this context also means the engagement of an "employee" whose primary contract is with someone else, for example, a temporary work agency. (This meaning of "hiring" will not influence the status-in-employment classification of the "employee", but is likely to lead to a different classification of the "employee" by industry.) A self-employed worker who hires a "casual worker" on a contract which leads the latter to be classified as an "own-account worker" (see para. 33 above), should not be classified as an "employer", but it may be appropriate to have "users of casual workers" as a separate category of "own-account workers".

E. Managers and directors

36. Many countries restrict their definitions of "employers" and "own-account workers" to those who operate unincorporated enterprises. This means that managers, directors and other salaried officials who work in such enterprises are to be classified as "employees", even though they may perform the same functions as "employers", and even though, particularly in small incorporated enterprises, they or their family often own all or a controlling part of the enterprise. (It also means that the observed number of self-employed workers, on the one hand, and the number of employees, on the other, are affected by the legal situation concerning the incorporation of enterprises, as pointed out by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.) 17/ To answer the question whether such managers should be regarded as "self-employed", it seems appropriate to refer back to the suggestions made in paragraph 32 above, which probably would lead to most managers in this situation being classified as "employees". However, they should be distinguished from other "employees", as should persons who have the authority to hire and fire workers on behalf of an enterprise.

F. Outworkers (home workers)

37. Typically, outwork involves work at home (i.e., not under the direct supervision of the employer) to deliver a certain amount of goods or services to one or more employer. The actual work situations of outworkers are varied with respect to the type and degree of control of the work, the type and degree of economic risk associated with the jobs, the ownership of raw materials and capital equipment used and the protection by labour legislation. Often, outworkers provide the raw materials and machinery used by themselves, in addition to lighting, heating and premises. Sometimes, outworkers use other persons, such as family members or subcontractors, to do part of the work. It is suggested that the RE/ICSE should classify all persons who do piece-work at home for one or more employers rather than for their own clients as "employees". Persons who work for profit or fees in their own home (or from the home as a base) should be included among "own-account workers". 18/ An "outworker" who is also an "employer" or who has subcontracted work to others should always be classified as "self-employed".

G. "Household account workers" and "unpaid family workers"

38. It is argued that there are definite advantages to identifying the household as a separate type of productive economic unit in which an "own-account worker" carries out productive activities with the possible assistance of household members. 19/ It would be consistent with this suggestion to have a status-in-employment group combining the "own-account workers" and the "unpaid family workers" in a group for "household account workers". This group would meet the criticism that to classify one member of the household production unit as "own-account worker" and others as "unpaid family workers" is misleading and discriminatory. On the other hand, customs and laws in many countries place different household members in very different positions with respect to ownership of business assets, rights to enter into business contracts or to receive and dispose of business incomes and responsibilities for business liabilities. Such differences may warrant the retention of a distinction between various members of the same household production unit. Thus, it would be necessary to define the "head" or "manager" of the household production unit, as well as to find a more appropriate term than "unpaid family workers" for the other members of this production unit.

H. Members of producers' co-operatives

39. Producers' co-operatives represent a method for pooling productive resources and reducing the economic risks carried by the individual members. This also involves giving up some of the independence of the members and submitting to a certain amount of control by the co-operative. Being a member of a producers' co-operative, therefore, represents a situation intermediary to that of the "own-account worker" and the "employee" in terms of the status-in-employment variable. Many countries, in which there are relatively few members of producers' co-operatives tabulate them together with "own-account workers" or the broader group "self-employed". This is consistent with the present ICSE rules for classifying "partners", who are to be classified with "employers" or "own-account workers". Whether this would be consistent with the suggestions made in paragraph 32 above concerning how to draw the dividing line between "employees" and "own-account workers" probably depends on national circumstances or even on the situation in the individual co-operative. This may be an argument for keeping a separate group for "members of producers' co-operatives" in the RE/ICSE, which should then probably include "partners" to achieve conceptual consistency.

I. "Share-croppers" and "franchise holders"

40. Many workers who are being classified as self-employed according to the present ICSE are subject to different types of control by other economic factors which may significantly limit their freedom of operation (see, for example, the discussion in paragraphs 37-39 above). Such control is linked to the ownership and acquisition of means of production, raw materials and other inputs used by the "self-employed workers" and related credit arrangements, and often affects the terms under which services and products are produced and sold. The type and means

of such controls will vary according to historical, social and economic circumstances of countries, as well as to the type of work. Further work is needed to establish patterns that are sufficiently common across countries and areas of work to form a basis for distinct categories within the groups of "own-account workers" and "employers". At this stage, it seems likely that such subdivisions should include groups for and definitions of "owner-holders" (in agriculture and other industries), "franchise holders", "tenant holders" and "sharecroppers", but further work is needed.

VIII. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

41. So far, the discussion has been without any references to how a RE/ICSE is to be implemented in actual statistical censuses and surveys. It is clear that a classification by status in employment that only distinguishes between a small number of classes is much easier to handle from a data collection point of view than one that makes distinctions between a large number of different groups - if the groups defined correspond closely to existing and easily recognizable work situations. The industrialized economies, in which the core employee situations, the core own-account worker situations and/or member of producers' co-operative situations dominate, seems traditionally to have satisfied this condition, and pre-coded responses could be used on questionnaires with little explanatory information needed for respondents or interviewers. However, in revising ICSE, it must be recognized that the creation of a more valid, but also more complex, "status-in-employment" variable is likely to require more complex and costly data-collection procedures. Internationally as well as nationally, there may therefore be a trade-off between a valid, complex variable that will only be used in a limited number of specialized surveys and a simpler, less precise version that will be used in censuses and most surveys. However, the clear identification of the conceptual basis and definitions of the status-in-employment variable and its component parts will serve as a basis for the instructions to and training of interviewers, and thereby contribute to the enhancement of data quality, even if it is not possible to apply a questionnaire elaborate enough to ensure collection of the information needed to implement with precision the distinctions made in the status-in-employment classification.

42. As outlined in the previous sections, it seems that definitions of groups in the RE/ICSE may be quite complex and, on a statistical questionnaire, may need several questions in order to be implemented. In operational terms, the work with a revised ICSE at this level may therefore take the form of defining several different variables and rules for ways in which these variables should be combined to arrive at desired status-in-employment groups. Some of the variables already commonly collected in population censuses and surveys may serve as adequate proxies for distinctions one may wish to make, in particular, "occupation", "industry" and "place of work" (i.e., "at home/at a separate place"). In other cases, supplementary variables may be needed. Examples of such variables may be "type of remuneration" (in kind/tips/commissions/piece-rate/...), "length of contract", "type of contract" for the definition of subgroups of employees, and "type of tenancy", "length of contract", "type of contract", "terms of sales" and "scale (size) of operations" for subgroups of self-employed workers. With this approach,

the allocation of respondents to specific RE/ICSE groups will take place at the tabulation stage.

43. From an implementation point of view, it may therefore be appropriate to think of a RE/ICSE as existing in two versions, representing different resolutions and therefore different degrees of precision, in much the same way as the maps for a country can exist in more or less detailed versions:

(a) A summary version (SRE/ICSE) consisting of, for example, three to eight categories suitable for pre-coding in population censuses, large-scale household surveys and other surveys where status in employment is intended as a summary background variable only. The main difference from the present ICSE would be the possibility for providing enumerators and supervisors with better instructions on ways in which to resolve borderline cases;

(b) A more detailed version (DRE/ICSE) with possibly 20 to 30 different groups at the most detailed level (not all relevant for all countries), which would require responses to several questions to be implemented, and which therefore in practice could only be expected to be used in surveys focusing on the status-in-employment variable as an important topic in itself, or which are concerned with particular groups defined by the DRE/ICSE. The DRE/ICSE would also provide the basis for instructions on ways in which to resolve borderline cases when using the SRE/ICSE.

It is clear that with this strategy of two ICSE versions, the SRE/ICSE will have to rely on the respondents' subjective perception of their status in employment to a much larger extent than DRE/ICSE, and that this will lead to a certain amount of divergence in the classification of specific borderline-type jobs.

IX. FURTHER WORK

44. It is expected that a revised and expanded version of the present report, with a complete proposal for a RE/ICSE, will be presented to a meeting of experts in early 1992. It is expected that this meeting can be organized by ILO. The report for the meeting will be based on further work in the ILO Bureau of Statistics and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, as well as a discussion of the ideas mentioned in the present paper at international and regional meetings on issues related to employment and unemployment statistics. Based on the conclusions reached by the meeting of experts, which will also discuss proposals relating to statistics on employment in the informal sector, a proposal for a revised and expanded International Classification of Status in Employment will be presented to the fifteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, tentatively scheduled for January 1993. The conclusions and recommendations of that Conference will be submitted to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-seventh session.

X. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

45. The Commission may wish to:

(a) Comment on the conceptual basis for the International Classification of Statistics in Employment and units to be classified;

(b) Discuss preliminary suggestions and ideas presented on the definition of statistics in employment and on the delineation of categories and subcategories of ICSE, including the treatment of borderline groups;

(c) Endorse the proposals for further work.

Notes

1/ See, for example, G. Standing, A Labour Status Approach to Labour Statistics, Population and Labour Policies Programme Working Paper No. 139 (Geneva, 1983).

2/ See Supplementary Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 67/Add.1 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.1990.XVII.9).

3/ Information on the background of ICSE was adapted from International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE): Its Contents and Proposed Revisions for Adoption in the Future Population and Housing Censuses, report of the Expert Group on the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme, New York, 11-15 November 1985, pp. 5-7.

4/ See International Labour Office, International Classification According to Status, report prepared for the Ninth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva, 1957).

5/ International Labour Office, Total and Economically Active Population, Employment and Unemployment (Population Censuses), Statistical Sources and Methods, vol. 5 (Geneva, 1990).

6/ International Labour Office, Economically Active Population, Employment, Unemployment and Hours of Work (Household Surveys), Statistical Sources and Methods, vol. 3, second edition (Geneva, 1990).

7/ International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE): Its Contents and Proposed Revisions for Adoption in the Future Population and Housing Censuses, report of the Expert Group on the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme, New York, 11-15 November 1985, p. 3.

8/ International Labour Office, International Classification According to Status, report prepared for the Ninth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva, 1957), p. 6.

Notes (continued)

9/ The terms "typical" and "normal" employment status situations have also been used by some authors. As the numerical dominance of these situations may be questioned, the term "core" may perhaps be better than either of them. This term may also indicate the role these situations serve as convenient points of reference for other situations in much the same way as the "core" nuclear family of two married adults and two young children tends to serve as the point of reference for other types of household and family structures.

10/ E. Cordova, "From full-time wage employment to atypical employment: a major shift in the evolution of labour relations?", International Labour Review, vol. 125, No. 6, November-December 1986.

11/ International Labour Office, International Classification According to Status, report prepared for the Ninth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva, 1957), p. 22.

12/ International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE): Its Contents and Proposed Revisions for Adoption in the Future Population and Housing Censuses, report of the Expert Group on the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme, New York, 11-15 November 1985, p. 6.

13/ Supplementary Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 67/Add.1 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.1990.XVII.9), para. 67.

14/ See International Labour Office, International Classification According to Status, report prepared for the Ninth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva, 1957).

15/ International Labour Office, Ninth International Conference of Labour Statisticians 1957 (Geneva), p. 30.

16/ Ibid.

17/ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Definition of self-employment; cyclical sensitivity of self-employment", OECD Employment Outlook (Paris, 1986), note "C".

18/ See, for example, Statistical Office of the European Communities, "Summary and conclusions of the SNA Expert Group Meeting, in January 1989", Working Party on National Accounts, Luxembourg, 3 to 6 April 1989 (EUROSTAT/B2/CN 123e).

19/ See M. V. S. Rao, "Household economic activities: definition, concepts, survey methods, data analysis and evaluation", paper prepared for the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific/Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Expert Group Meeting on Developing Statistics of Household Economic Activities, Bangkok, 23-28 September 1985 (STAT/SHEA/5).
