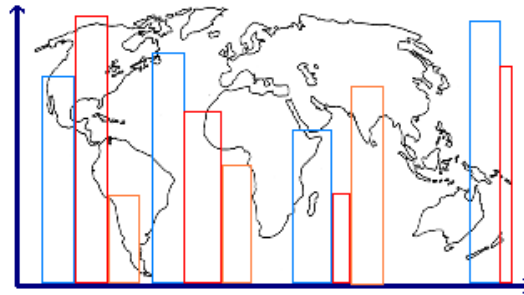


Global Action on Aging
DATA DISAGGREGATION PROJECT



Review on the 2006 UN Statistics Commission

The 37th session of the UN Statistical Commission took place in New York, UN Headquarters, March 7 - March 10, 2006. During the first meeting Member States unanimously elected Gilberto Calvillo-Vives, President of the Mexican National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics as the Commission's Chairperson to lead the discussions with the help of Paul Cheung, Director of the Statistics Division.

“The Commission is the apex entity in the international statistical system where international statistical standards and activities are considered and approved” according to the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division.

Social Statistics stood only as one item among many of the agenda of the Commission that was covering various issues such as industrial statistics, price statistics, energy statistics, national accounts, distributive trade statistics, etc. Member States, Experts and UN offices and representatives of world organizations producing global statistics raised many technical questions and observations.

Social Statistics

This item focused on the recent publication of the UN Statistical Division “World’s Women 2005: Progress in Statistics” released on January 16, 2006.

Mary Chamie, UN Chief of Demographic and Social Statistics made a brief presentation emphasizing the progress in the collection of sex and age disaggregated data since 1975. Mrs Chamie confessed representatives of numerous national statistics offices told her about their frustration in not seeing any real commitment of governments to develop their statistical capacities. She reminded the attendees about the 2010 World Program of Censuses, and urging governments to face their statistical challenges.

Among Member States interventions,

China announced it was preparing two main statistical works on education and persons with disabilities. The Chinese government plans to use a sample of 2,6 million persons to build reliable data about disability in China.

The **United States** said it welcomed this report focusing on “countries ability to report data”. It pointed out that the strategies proposed in the report may not be the only good ones to improve countries statistical capacities.

Surinam asked to change the descriptive term “violence against women” into “domestic violence” in order to account violence against men.

Jordan highlighted the necessity to get international institutions to support developing countries facing statistical challenges.

Member States clearly recognized the issue of the improving of statistical capacities not only about social data but also about economic data.

Among international organizations,

The **OECD** recommended that the report should pinpoint the absence of data reporting by eliminating UN estimations of missing figures.

The **UNECA** (UN Economic Commission for Africa) made three very interesting comments about the specificities of the issue in Africa. First he reproached the report's authors with not drawing a very bright portrait of Africa. The authors did not say that Africa's delay was due to a lack of capacity rather than to a lack of sensibility to the issue. UNECA then added that the enormous financial constraints were not even mentioned in the report. Last UNECA said that data collection should be improved by using the data registered in civil and administrative databases, but as long as countries' administrations themselves can offer reliable resources.

UNESCAW (UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia) asked for a better acknowledgement of gender-specificities in data collection.

Other Agenda Items and Social Concerns

Development Indicators

Although Global Action on Aging expected a visible social concern in the Commission for the item "Development Indicators" the main talk dealt with methods and reporting.

Accounting in the Informal Economy

During the discussions on the Statistics of Distribution, Niger raised a development-orientated. This country asked the Commission to think about the possible means and methods to account for informal, traditional economic activity and not only the "modern" sector that is estimated to represent only 12% of the economy.

Industrial Data Collection

Industrial statistics issues can accelerate reaching the level of accurate social data to build statistics. Actually the discussions on this item brought forward general principles that can also guide the implementation of policies aiming at the improvement of statistical capacities. Industrial statistics may fail by the lack of financial resources to conduct regular surveys. UN manuals on industrial data collection are 20 years old and ignore advanced technologies. Australia insisted on a better focus on data collection that

it considers the main issue. Therefore Australia asked the UN Statistical Division to prepare a paper showing the consequences of lacking data and how to achieve better collection. So during the talks on this item countries emphasized the necessity of high quality sources, concrete follow-up of data collection with monitoring and of having some prospective studies to show what could be obtained with a better collection.

New York, March 14, 2006

Additional Resources:

- Global Action on Aging's web page on Data Disaggregation
www.globalaging.org/elderrights/disaggregation_project/index.htm
- UNFPA's Report: *Advocacy and Resource Mobilization for the 2010 Round of Censuses*