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**SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE: TRAINING POLICY
PAPER ON TRAINING AND EDUCATION
IN THE ECLAC COUNTRIES**

Substantive issue: TRAINING POLICY

Paper on training and education in the ECLAC countries

Given its importance, ECLAC's Executive Committee decided at its third meeting in Santiago, Chile, on 24 and 25 May 2004, to examine training policy as a substantive issue at the third meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas (SCA) that will be held in Santiago during the month of June 2005.

The main strategic objective sought in designing a training policy is to implement a stable training system that can respond progressively and continuously to training requirements in the field of statistics in each country, in view of the demands of the national and international contexts.

Continued adjustment of statistics to new methods, technologies and technical knowledge is fundamental in building a high-quality statistical system. Training in statistics must adapt to a changing environment and to the constant appearance of new ideas and needs. In this context, the international statistical community should contribute to the on-going specialization of experts, seeking to develop new skills and creating value that can be transferred to the exercise of the profession. The strengthening and development of the profession of statistician and the development of methodologies in the production of official statistics help to improve national statistical systems, in addition to contributing to the integration and consistency of the international statistical system by enhancing the comparability and the usability of statistics.

It is important to design a training and education strategy based on technical, financial and human cooperation with national and international organizations, whose expected outputs will be:

1. Creation of a comprehensive statistical training and education program organized through bilateral and multilateral activities. To that end, it is necessary to study the current status of training in each of the countries, identifying financial and technical capacity and weak statistical areas that can be improved through concrete training activities. Different models for training programs could be explored to decide which would be the most appropriate. They range from the classical model of classroom education to the more practical model of on-the-job training through exchange programs, or even to on-line training through the use of the new Internet technologies.
2. The preparation of recommendations for the political class on the need to support and back statistical training programs and the actions of training institutions.
3. The design of a co-ordination mechanism for international cooperation activities to develop training. The ties among national statistics offices and between them

and training institutions (international, regional and national) will be strengthened to ensure effective coverage of training requirements (channelling international study grants, traineeships abroad, etc.).

4. Encouragement of best practices and exchanges of experience related to improvements in statistical training for countries and organizations.
5. Creation of a Consortium of Statistics Institutes. Ever since the Inter-American Centre for the Teaching of Statistics (CIENES) ceased to exist, the statistical institutions of the Americas have had no place to train their professionals and technical experts. Despite the fact that today the universities have taken a more active role in the academic training of statisticians, this academic training does not always respond to the practical problems that the institutes have to address.

To respond to training requirements, different institutes in the region have created their own training mechanisms for their staff. Countries as Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Chile have statistical training departments or schools in their institutional structures that essentially cover their immediate needs.

Furthermore, the work developed by the national statistical offices from different countries in the field of international cooperation through training and technical assistance actions has been very important as vehicle and driving force to stimulate the statistical education in Latin America.

The National Statistical Institute (INE) of Spain, directly or through its agency for the international cooperation has played an active role in training by means of the courses it offers in its headquarters in Madrid or in the centres of the Spanish Agency for the International Cooperation (AECI) in Cartagena de Indias (Colombia), Antigua (Guatemala), and Santa Cruz de la Sierra (Bolivia) or in other headquarters.

INSEE of France regularly provides training on specific topics at its headquarters in Paris and through consultants in the countries of the Americas, particularly in Mexico, the Andean countries, Argentina, Brazil and Chile.

The United States Census Bureau also has a statistical training program applied to censuses, which is financed through United States technical-cooperation programs for developing countries. The courses are varied in nature and are mainly given in Washington D.C. or selected countries.

The technical-cooperation agencies of the United Nations system also offer training courses in statistics for officials in countries where they are carrying out projects. Sometimes they invite people from neighbouring countries to participate in them.

Last, the United Nations Economic and Social Council, when it established the Millennium Goals for each country, has indirectly placed the burden of generating information to feed the indicators on compliance with those goals on the statistical institutions.

Independently of the above, the latest academic developments in statistics, the application of new methodologies, and new processing techniques are not always available to statistical institutions, which are lagging behind in these fields.

The following proposal is made in this context of actions and developments. The purpose of this proposal is to establish a consortium of statistics institutes that would be responsible for:

- coordinating the statistical training efforts currently under way;
- deciding on general training priorities for their technical experts and professionals;
- establishing a medium-term plan of activities which would determine areas of specialization, to which professionals and technicians from the participating countries would have access;
- exploring and studying the application of new methods and techniques in statistical processes and facilitate their implementation in the different countries;
- seeking external financing to be used for study grants, to contract experts and to finance support and training missions, with emphasis on horizontal cooperation.

The statistics institutes, initially those in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Spain, Mexico and the USA, through their presidents and/or national directors, have the goal of establishing a consortium of institutes intended to improve the technical and academic level of personnel, through co-ordinated and concurrent actions, using the installed capacity in each of them and seeking technical and financial support for the normal development of training activities.

For this purpose, a short questionnaire has been designed to be completed by each of the countries. This consultation is intended to:

- a. Obtain information on the technical, financial and human resource capacity of each of the countries to implement training plans.

- b. Identify the statistical fields that are training priorities. Common interests need to be identified for planning multilateral activities.
- c. Prepare an inventory of national and international agencies that are involved in some aspect of training and education in the field of official statistics that are interested in participating in international training programs and sharing experiences, knowledge and materials.

ECLAC's Executive Committee placed special stress on the importance of learning about financial and technical availabilities in each of the countries – for example whether there is a national training centre, the type of training it provides, the possibility of organizing national and international activities, the source of financing, the number and profiles of trainers, etc. – in order to determine the scope and scale of training policies and adequately coordinate courses and other training activities.

The questionnaire will provide information on these aspects that can be used as an input for designing a training plan which, through highly specialized events, will help to broaden and deepen the knowledge of statisticians. All the resources available will be used to that end.

The committee also felt that training and education based on the distance education model was worth examining. This is a type of training that does not take place in the classroom and is based on the design and development of different methodological strategies, means and study materials, to establish an adequate relationship between the people participating as a group in a training process, who do not coincide in time or place.