

PREFACE

In 1983 estimates of the levels and trends of infant mortality for all the countries of the world were first published by the Population Division of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, with the support and encouragement of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the assistance of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations regional commissions (United Nations, 1983a). Since then, those estimates and projections have been updated twice by the United Nations (United Nations, 1986 and 1988). Recently, an additional indicator of child mortality—namely, mortality of children under the age of 5—was added (United Nations, 1988). Because of the lack of reliable vital-registration statistics in most developing countries, the available estimates are often obtained by the use of indirect estimation methods.

Aware of the possible problems in the interpretation and use of such methods, UNICEF, which has played an important role in disseminating information about levels and trends of mortality in childhood, requested the Population Division of the United Nations Secretariat to prepare the present guide to the estimation of child mortality in order to familiarize a wide audience with the estimation methods most commonly used and their strengths and limitations.

From a demographic perspective, the *Guide* is closely related to the series of Population Division manuals

aimed at promoting widespread understanding and use of the estimation methods developed in the various population fields. Though the *Guide* is simpler and less comprehensive than other manuals covering similar topics, it does not sacrifice substance to simplification and thus provides a solid basis for understanding all the intricacies of the methods available. It is thus useful both for the demographer wishing to master those methods and for the non-demographer whose aim is to become familiar with their main traits.

To accompany the *Guide*, a program for microcomputers, named QFIVE, was prepared by the Population Division expressly to apply the Brass method as described here.* Special thanks are due to Kenneth Hill of Johns Hopkins University, who wrote a preliminary version of the *Guide*. It was later expanded by the Population Division, in order to make its contents more accessible to those who are not familiar with recent demographic techniques.

Acknowledgement is also due to UNICEF for providing part of the financial support that made the *Guide* possible.

*Inquiries concerning the QFIVE program should be directed to the Director, Population Division, United Nations, New York, New York 10017.

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