

Part One

**REPORT ON THE MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON
DATA BASES FOR MEASUREMENT OF LEVELS,
TRENDS AND DIFFERENTIALS IN MORTALITY**

INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

As part of the joint programme of the United Nations Secretariat and the World Health Organization (WHO), the Meeting of the Working Group on Data Bases for Measurement of Levels, Trends and Differentials in Mortality was convened at Bangkok, Thailand, from 20 to 23 October 1981, with the financial support of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). The objective of the interregional meeting was to discuss experiences by various government bodies and national institutions in the collection, analysis and use of mortality data relevant to the setting of policies in the health and development sectors of their countries. The meeting was endorsed by the Population Commission at its twenty-first session, held from 26 January to 4 February 1981.¹

The participants included 22 scholars with expertise in mortality measurement and the setting of health policy, representatives of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and of the Director-General of WHO; representatives of Secretariat units, regional commissions, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies; and staff of the Population Division of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations and of the WHO Secretariat.

The following persons, who were invited in a personal capacity, served as members of the Working Group: John G. C. Blacker (United Kingdom); Stan D'Souza (India); Douglas C. Ewbank (United States of America); John Hobcraft (United Kingdom); Antoine Houehouge (Institut de formation et de recherche démographiques); Kwok Kwan Kit (Malaysia); Elsebeth Lynge (Denmark); Khin Maung Lwin (WHO); Bothina Mahmoud el Deeb (Egypt); Anthony S. K. Mak (Hong Kong); Luis Massé (France); Teodora Morales de Díaz (Peru); Iwao M. Moriyama (United States of America); M. Nizamuddin (India); Leopoldo Núñez Fernández (Mexico); P. Padmanabha (India); Samuel H. Preston (United States of America); Ruth R. Puffer (United States of America); Santhat Sermsri (Thailand); Siva Subramaniam (Sri Lanka); Ken Williams (United Kingdom); Fatu Yumkella (Sierra Leone). Mr. Preston served as Rapporteur for the Working Group.

Léon Tabah, Director of the Population Division, represented the Secretary-General of the United Nations at the Meeting. Kazeo Uemura, Director, Division of Health Statistics, represented the Director-General of WHO. Messrs. Tabah and Uemura served as Co-Chairmen.

Zulma Recchini de Lattes, Chief, Population Trends and Structure Section, Population Division; and Larry

Heligman, Population Affairs Officer of that section, served as Technical Secretaries from the United Nations Secretariat. Harald Hansluwka, Chief, Global Epidemiological Surveillance and Health Situation Assessment; and Kyo Handa, Statistician, served as Technical Secretaries from the WHO Secretariat. Rose Kian, Population Trends and Structure Section, Population Division, served as Working Group Co-ordinator.

The Statistical Office of the United Nations was represented by William Seltzer, Chief, Demographic and Social Statistics Branch.

The United Nations Fund for Population Activities was represented by K. V. R. Moorthy.

Michael N. Azefor represented the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); Boonlert Leoprapi and Abdus Samad represented the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) was represented by M. T. R. Sarma; and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was represented by G. Carceles.

The Meeting was opened by Mr. Tabah, on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations; by Mr. Uemura, on behalf of the Director-General of WHO; and by Mr. Princy H. Siriwardene, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP. They welcomed the experts and thanked them for their assistance to the United Nations/WHO joint work programme in the field of mortality studies.

B. ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK

The provisional agenda was adopted, and the items considered by the Working Group were:

- Use of mortality data for health and development programmes;
- Approaches for collection of mortality data;
- Use of continuous registration systems;
- Collection of mortality data through multi-purpose surveys;
- Birth or death records as a sampling frame for studies of mortality;
- Special data-collection systems for studying health processes.

Papers covering the various topics had been prepared by the members of the Working Group and were presented at the Meeting.²

NOTES

¹Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1981, Supplement No. 3(E/1981/13), para. 162.

²For list of documents, see annex to this report.