

## TRAINING PROGRAMME OF THE SPANISH NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE FOR LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES

Carmen Arribas  
Head of International Programmes  
National Statistical Institute  
Madrid, Spain

### 1. Introduction

Since 1978, the National Statistical Institute in collaboration with the Department of Foreign Affairs provides a Programme of Technical Cooperation for Latin American and Caribbean countries.

This programme is financed by the Spanish Government, but in some occasions participants were helped by fellowships through the United Nations Agencies or through their national resources.

This training Programme supports the implementation in the Region of United Nations "National Household Survey Capability Programme" (NHSCP).

From the beginning of the Programme more than 250 government statisticians from the following countries have participated in Courses or Seminars: Argentina, Bolivia, Brasil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, México, Nicaragua, Panamá, Paraguay, Perú, República Dominicana, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

The Programme includes: Courses and Seminars, for Latin American statisticians organized in Spain, and missions of Spanish experts to countries which request them. Below some details are given of the content of the Programme as well as a summary of the work already carried out.

The Courses and Seminars are prepared having in mind those persons that have direct responsibility for the production or analyses of statistical data in National Statistical Offices, Government Departments, Central Banks or other Official Bodies.

The courses in question include both practical and theoretical aspects. As far as possible, we have tried to avoid the deficiencies and gaps which are often found in university training as regards the formation of a class of statisticians whose main aim is the production and analyses of statistics. As Zarkovich said (1982) "we find courses which we never need, and don't find those we do".

The decision to "whom" the programme is addressed, conditions its duration and content. It is clear that a person with direct responsibility in his country cannot be away from his work for months; whilst this is also true for those in charge of the courses or carry out missions to foreign countries.

## 2. Courses and Seminars

There are two basic Courses, each three weeks long: one on "Sampling with Applications to Household Surveys" and the other on "National Accounts".

Since 1982, Seminars have been set up during the week following the above Courses to deal with monographic subjects. In 1982 a Seminar was held on "Population Census" in 1983 a "Seminar on Agricultural Census" following the Sampling Course and another one on "Indicators of the Industrial Sector in connection with its application to National Accounts" following the National Accounts Course.

In 1984 and 1985 Seminars on the "Industrial Enquiry" and on the "Consumer Price Index" were held.

In 1986 following the Sampling Course a "Seminar on the Preparatory works for the 1990 Round of Population and Housing Censuses" was carried out, and we will repeat the Seminar on the Consumer Price Index with one representative of the International Labour Organization.

As mentioned above it was necessary to find a balance between theory and practice which so often appear as "different worlds without any communication" (Bjerve 1975). The separation of theory and practice and also between professional statisticians (academic and practitioners) has been widely dealt with over the last 30 years in the main statistical reviews and also in presidential addresses at the opening of numerous Congresses. In response to this the International Statistical Institute created a Committee of Statistical Integration (1976) and sponsored the first international meeting on the Teaching of Statistics (Sheffield 1982).

In our Courses on "Sampling with Applications to Household Surveys" the balance between theory and practice is approximately one third of theory versus two thirds of practice.

The theory covers the main subjects on sampling of interest for Statistical Offices (stratifications, systematic sampling, cluster, multi-stage and multiphase sampling; sampling on successive occasions, sampling and non-sampling errors, ratio and regression estimators, etc.). In this way, we hope to prepare the scientific ground-work for the practical subjects covering the main basic household surveys which the Institute carries out: The Labour Force Survey and the Family Expenditure Survey.

Among the practical aspects of these Surveys the following topics are dealt with:

Concepts, definitions, design of the questionnaires, formation and updating of the frame, size of the sample – and the selection of sampling units for the various stages, updating of probabilities, rotation of the sample, evaluation of the results (sampling and non-sampling errors), partition, fusion and variation of the limits of the primary stage units, etc. In the organization of the field work, particular attention is paid to the budget, the re-

cruiting of interviewers and their training and supervision, the dates and control of cost. Finally, in relation with data processing the detection of errors, data editing, the generation systems for tables, estimation programmes and the dissemination of information are considered.

In the Courses on "National Accounts" a part is given to concepts and accounts definitions following the System of National Accounts (SNA) of the United Nations and the European System of Accounts (ESA) of the European Communities. About two thirds of this Course is dedicated to practical aspects in the production of National Accounts Statistics (Methods of Estimation of Gross National Product, and other macro-economic aggregates, Economic Regional Accounts, Input/Output Tables, etc.).

The Seminars in general have a different scope. They are related to practical works done by our Institute and the participants have the possibility to discuss all the different phases included.

Participants have also the possibility to explain the difficulties faced in their countries to carry out these Projects and the possible new solutions to improve their quality.

For the next 4 years we plan to have each year a Seminar on the "1990 Round of Population and Housing Censuses". In 1986 we started with the Preparatory works and we will work in the near future with all the phases relating this Project. The countries participating in our Programme of Technical Co-operation are very much interested in this topic and we try to discuss together the content concepts, definitions, organization of field work and data processing for the next round of Censuses. One of the most important aims is to obtain a good frame for Household Surveys which will permit the countries to gather the required information in this field.

### 3. Expert Missions

When a country within this area plans to implement a new project or tries to introduce important modifications to one that already exists that country may request an Expert to discuss methodological and practical questions connected with the Project.

The duration of the Expert missions are short as we consider more useful for the countries have an Expert two or three times during the elaboration of a Project to check different phases.

It also should be mentioned that some countries have asked the organization of a specific Course or Seminar locally to contact with greater number of national statisticians working in the country in different Departments.

Our experience in this area has been very interesting and the reaction of national participants very well appreciated.