EDITORIAL

The Editor is always pleased when he has too much material to print. For ISEN this happened for the first time in the last issue, and so the report on the ISI Education Committee was held back: it appears below.

The other mainstream issues concern two aspects of statistical training in Africa. It is quite clear from these, and from a number of previous articles or notes on STPA published in ISEN, that there is a great deal of activity in Africa. Different parts of the world have quite different needs, but there must be some developments occurring, and the Editor would be very pleased to hear of them.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Following meetings of the Education Committee during the 44th Session of ISI in Madrid, the Chairman, J. Gani, reviewed activities during the period 1981 to 1983 as follows:

The past two years have been a busy period of consolidation, as well as of radically new developments for the ISI Education Committee. The three Taskforces on

A. International Conferences on Teaching Statistics
   (Chairman: L. Råde)
B. Teaching Statistics at School Level
   (Chairman: V. Barnett)
C. Tertiary and Technical Education in Statistics
   (Chairman: R.H. Loynes)

have managed to maintain a high level of activity on very limited budgets.

The main thrust of Taskforce A was directed towards the planning of the First International Conference on the Teaching of Statistics (ICOTS 1) for which it served as the Programme Committee. The meeting, held in Sheffield in August 1982, proved a great success. It was attended by just under 100 participants from all over the world. Planning for ICOTS 2 in 1986 has already begun, and its venue is to be the University of Victoria, British Columbia; the Programme Committee Chairman is R. Hogg of the University of Iowa and the Local Organising Committee Chairman is J. Swift of Nanaimo, B.C. A Round Table Conference on the impact of calculators and computers on the teaching of statistics is also planned for Canberra in August 1984, in conjunction with the Fifth International Conference in Mathematical Education (ICME 5) in Adelaide, Australia.

Taskforce B has continued with its numerous activities in statistical education for schools. It has issued a Newsletter, has remained closely involved in the publication of the magazine "Teaching Statistics", and has produced a volume on "Teaching Statistics in Schools Throughout the World" which has had an excellent reception. Professor Barnett and his group of co-workers in Sheffield were the local organisers of ICOTS 1 and their careful planning ensured its success. They have recently issued the Proceedings of the Conference in 2 Volumes. A more recent achievement has been the creation of the Centre for Statistical Education in Sheffield, jointly supported by the University and Polytechnic of that city. The ISI Education Committee has expressed its strong support of this new Centre and agreed to give a modest donation to assist it in establishing itself.

Taskforce C has moved towards more regular annual activities. It has produced the International Statistical Education Newsletter (ISEN, 3 issues a year), has responded to enquiries on statistical education, and assisted with developments in Africa and S.E. Asia. Dr. Loynes will be attending the third meeting of Directors of Centres Participating in the Statistical Training Program for Africa in November 1983. There have been moves on the issue of a revised edition of the Almanac of Statistical Training Centres, and plans for a possible meeting of their Directors. Future activities include the preparation of a volume on "Teaching Statistics Round the World" at other than the school level, and the preparation of an International Directory of Statistical Groups, jointly with ASAA.

IASS has made suggestions for joint activities in the area of education in the collection of statistical information. At ICOTS 1 in Sheffield, 1982, it was agreed that a concrete proposal for such activities, to be approved by the IASS Council should be prepared for Madrid; IASS has now charged a small committee with the preparation of a practical project in this area. The Education Committee looks forward to a plan of joint action on this important issue, and has allocated a session to IASS at ICOTS 2.

ISEC, Calcutta has now implemented many of the recommendations made in 1979; a site visit by
Dr. J. Gani is to occur in December 1983, which will result in a full report of the progress made since then. It was suggested that in future, a member of the ISU Education Committee or a member of ISI, due to visit India, might be asked to carry out a site visit on behalf of the Committee, in order to save on travel funds.

The Education Committee has long recognised that its activities must be regular and must develop continuously. To do this, it is essential that Taskforce members meet regularly to plan developments, to participate in Round Table Conferences, and to take new initiatives. For such meetings to occur, a budget far larger than the present one would be required. In the light of the Committee's needs, one could justifiably recommend an increase of the Education budget; this may well be if the activities planned with IASS are to be implemented.

To conclude, the Education Committee, despite modest subvention from UNESCO, has consolidated its activities during the past 2 years. Chairmen and members of the Taskforces have worked hard and made valuable contributions to statistical education conferences, publications, and activities. The Committee is poised on the exciting new developments; greater financial support would make them a reality.

J. Gani, Chairman, ISI Education Committee

REPORTS FROM ROUND THE WORLD

THIRD MEETING OF DIRECTORS OF CENTRES PARTICIPATING IN THE STPA

The first meeting of directors took place at the headquarters of the ECA in Addis Ababa in 1979; the second meeting, which was reported in ISRN No.3 (February 1982), was held in Addis Ababa in November 1981. The third meeting, of similar structure, took place, again in Addis Ababa, from 31 October to 4 November, 1983. As before, in addition to the Directors themselves, representatives of donor organisations, and a number of observers, including one from the ISI, were present.

The meeting reviewed progress to date; considered current activities, and went on to look at the future. Some concerns were expressed, as before: that the main barrier to statistical self-sufficiency for the African region lies in the problem of 'the training of trainers'; and much discussion about how this problem might be solved took place. Consideration was given to the question of whether further centres might be set up in Africa, and particular concern was expressed at the difficulties experienced by Portuguese-speaking countries. The needs for training in computer statistics, rather than computer specialist discussed at length, and an outline syllabus was put forward for discussion; similarly non-SPA training in demography was considered. A syllabus for in-service (low level) train was approved, an earlier version having been circulated for comments; the appointment of co-ordinator for the preparation of a 'guide syllabus' professional level was discussed at length. (Most of these activities need to be dealt with differently for the two language groups - Anglophone and Francophone.)

The other large item of business was the EC/ACP/ECAM study of statistical training in Africa, reported on more fully below.

STUDY OF THE NEEDS FOR STATISTICAL EDUCATION IN AFRICA

Miss J. Church, now in the U.K. Central Statistical Office, but attached at the time of the study to the Statistical Office of the European Communities (SOEC) on leave from the U.K. Overseas Development Administration, writes:

The Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA) was started in 1978 by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) with the objective of providing the region with a permanent support for providing statistical personnel. Fifteen regional training centres participated in the programme. In 1980, the ECA Council of Ministers requested financial assistance to the STPA from the European Community in the form of student fellowships at the Centre; fellowships for training lecturers; and counterpart lecturers for those being trained.

In order to formulate an effective response to this request, the Statistical Office of the European Communities (SOEC) was commissioned to carry out a study to analyse the needs for statistical training in Africa over the next decade. This study had the support and assistance of the ECA, EC Member States and the ACP countries. Its objectives were:

a) to heighten awareness by government authorities of the importance of statistics;

b) to collect data on which to base estimates of the numbers of statistical training needs;

c) to evaluate the resources needed to satisfy the needs and how their provision might be envisaged in improving African statistical services.

Visits were made to the majority of the ACP countries and to each STPA centre, on which reports were prepared. Summary reports and national status of the statistical system, the employ statistics and training patterns; established Centre reports describe their background and acts. A summary report was also prepared which accepted by the European Commission, and was discussed at the Third Meeting of Directors of STPA Centre, November 1983.

The main conclusions of the study were that the European Commission must express their willingness to improve their statistical services by devoting fellowships already at their disposal to the training of statisticians. The most immediate need is identified in training opportunities for the newly qualified staff, and the the need for higher priority, should be developing such programmes locally. For professional training, stronger emphasis should be given to training in statistical methods rather than in mathematical statistics. The report recommends that the practical assistance given to STPA centres to help them achieve these aims is due to the European Commission is now considering a way of implementing this through, for example, provision of micro-computers, and links with European universities, for STPA centres and assistance in setting up local training facilities for sub-professional staff.

SIUKISHA STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION

The Association's Education Committee has begun the publication in Swedish of a newsletter, with L. Sade as editor. Issues 1 and 2 have appeared during 1983.

ISRN Vol. 4 missing issue

The February issue of 1984 was not printed due to difficulties in making the printing deadline. It is intended that the material involved will be included in future issues.