

# Community-level statistics

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Economic and Social Development Department

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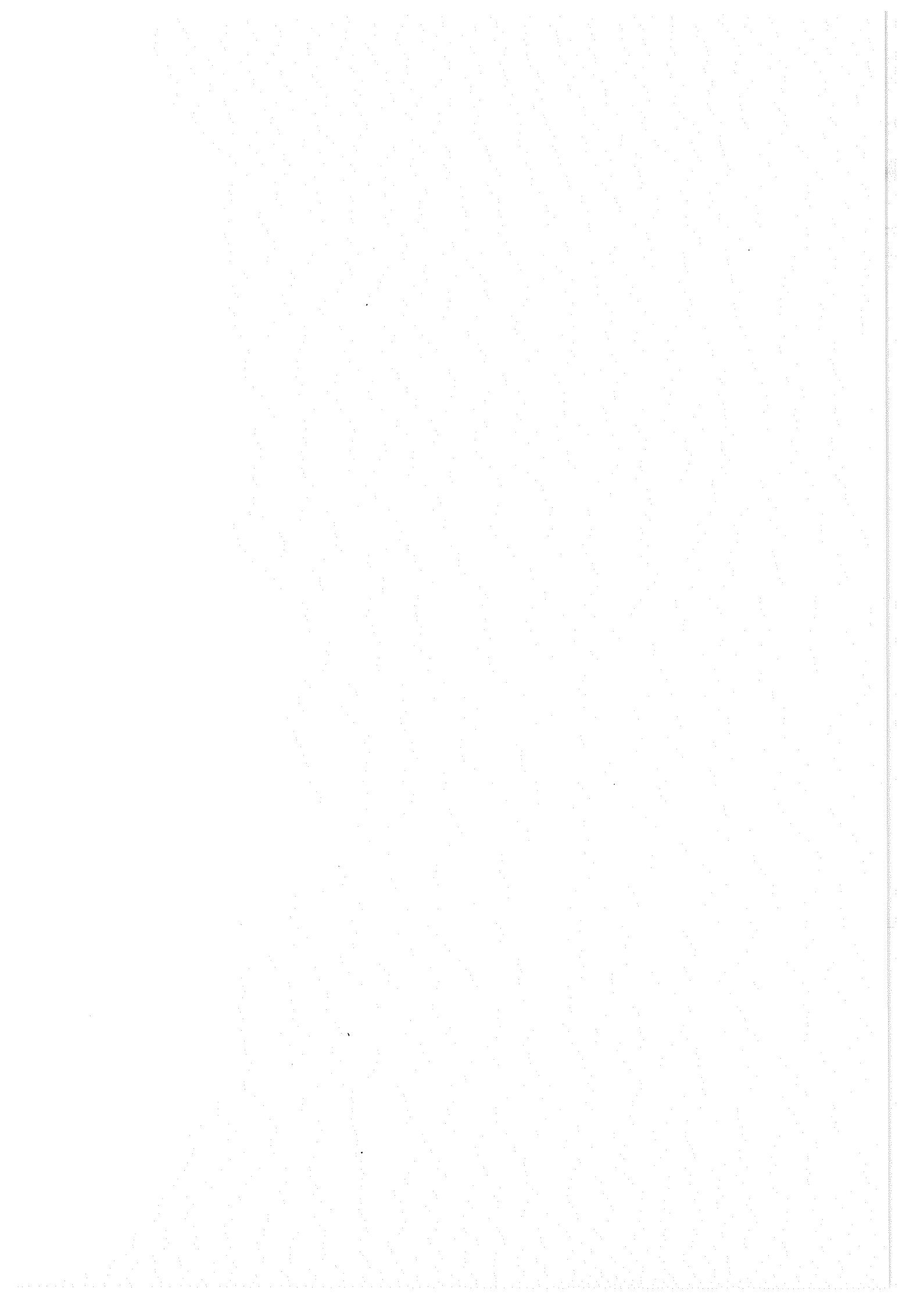
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FOREWORD

The Statistics Division is re-evaluating all of its Statistical Programme Development Manuals with the intent to formulate a system approach to the planning, development and conduct of national statistical programmes for food and agriculture with emphasis on developing countries. For example, manuals are under preparation in such important areas as information systems for food and agricultural decision-making, the 1990 World Census of Agriculture Programme, collecting food and agricultural statistics through household surveys and a Glossary of Terminology used in Food and Agricultural Statistics, in addition to this Manual on Community Level Statistics. Manuals covering the collection and/or preparation of statistics in technical areas such as agricultural prices, commodity supply/utilization accounts, food balance sheets, investment flows into agriculture, economic accounts for agriculture and monitoring and evaluating agrarian reform and rural development using socio-economic indicators will also be developed or revised.

Leroy Quance  
Director  
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## CHAPTER I - SIGNIFICANCE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROGRAMME

### 1.0 Introduction

Many developing countries have for some time past embarked on systematic planning for socio-economic development with a view to removing the poverty of the people. The usual approach has been to prepare plans and projects at the national level and to some extent disaggregate these at the regional level. Most of the countries have, however, discovered that this procedure, the top down approach, does not necessarily lead to an even and balanced economic and social growth. In both the national and the regional plans, allocations of public outlay are made to principal sectors of the economy and social activities in the light of accepted priorities and desired targets of growth. However, the remoteness of the planning agencies from areas of implementation and the vastness of geographical coverage hamper the matching of sectorial financial allocations as well as the potential for regulating the distribution of development gains. Nor can the sectorial allocations be integrated with the local resources in a manner that optimises returns in terms of production, increased employment and income of the community (village or locality) in general and of the people below the poverty line in particular. The disillusionment with 'Top down' approach has led to a significant change in the planning process in several countries. A new approach is concerned with planning at the micro-levels. Its basic philosophy is to involve people in the village or locality in the development process from programme planning through execution and evaluation. Individuals whether a person or a group of persons in the village or locality are to be encouraged to think and decide themselves the priority of development that they consider best for them. However, in all this, the national requirements and parameters of development have to be maintained. In other words, the 'Top down' planning is to be disaggregated through people's involvement.

The reorientation of the development strategy from 'Top down' to 'Bottom up' planning involves the identification of the main constraint of the people, careful examination of the locally available resources in relation to the felt needs of these people and more precise designing of the policies and action programmes which will help to improve their conditions. This would require a comprehensive data base at the village or locality level, much more detailed and timely than what the national statistical system have at present. Building up a comprehensive data base at the village or locality level is a long drawn process but it is important to make a beginning if micro planning is to have real impact on the poor.

### 1.1 Background

The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAPA) since 1975 had tried to develop a profile of statistics at the village or locality level to help implementation of its Small Farmers' Development Programme in several countries of the Region involving people at different levels, particularly the rural poor in the development process. This resulted in the preparation of the Small Farmers' Development Manual, Vol. I and II by a team of officers in RAPA, which dealt, at some length, with the profile of statistics at the village or locality level required for the implementation of the project.

The Seventh Session of the Asia and Far East Commission on Agricultural Statistics (AFCAS) held in Bangkok in August 1978 considered the requirements of data in the light of the new strategies for development and strongly recommended the programme

for the promotion of village or locality level statistics. The RAPA took the initiative and organized an ad hoc committee consisting of representatives of the selected member countries and several UN Agencies (ESCAP, ILO, UNICEF and ADB) to discuss procedures for the development of village or locality level statistics. The FAO also sponsored a study team consisting of experts from selected member countries, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Philippines and Thailand and International Organizations like FAO, ESCAP, ADB, UNDP and SIAP, who visited the Republic of Korea and the Philippines in 1979 and observed the statistical systems developed in these countries for village or locality level statistics. In the meantime, a manual on community level statistics prepared by the Government of Bangladesh was also made available. The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, separately prepared a Training Manual on community level statistics. On the request of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, an expert was also deputed by the FAO to Jordan during 1981-82 to study the village statistics system in that country and make suggestions for its improvement.

Taking into account all the relevant material available, and the experiences of various experts, it was thought to formulate some guidelines on the subject and make them available to member countries specially those developing countries which are planning or engaged in the Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ARRD).

## 1.2 Main Characteristics and Scope of the Programme

The Programme places emphasis on several important aspects of data collection at the village or locality level. Consideration is to be given to the new emphasis on decentralization of decision making process, in particular, the planning machinery within the framework of national policy, to enable people's participation in planning, formulation and implementation of development programmes and evaluation of results thereof.

The collection and analysis of data at the village or locality level are based on the assumption that these would be necessary for formulating schemes for the improvement of the living standards of all people at the village or locality level, in particular the rural poor, and for monitoring and evaluating progress of the projects. The proposed programme of development of village or locality level statistics is not supposed to duplicate the collection of data under the existing systems of various countries, but it is rather expected to supplement the present sources of information from surveys and censuses and administrative records by involving the local people. It is assumed that the national system of data collection will develop a procedure for tabulation of information at the village or locality level, which are needed for planning purposes, and the gap in information will be filled through the implementation of the village or locality level statistics programme. Individual countries have their own statistical system. The data base for each of the systems is generally agency specific. Statistical project planning,

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