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**REGIONAL SEMINAR ON NEW PERSPECTIVES
IN POPULATION COMMUNICATION IN THE PACIFIC
(Auckland, New Zealand, 26 February - 2 March 1990)**

REPORT

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CONTENTS

	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. AGENDA	3
III. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS	5
IV. RECOMMENDATIONS	9
V. LIST OF DOCUMENTS	11
VI. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	13

I. INTRODUCTION

The Regional Seminar on New Perspectives in Population Communication in the Pacific was held in Auckland, New Zealand from 26 February to 2 March 1990.

The Seminar was organised by the South Pacific Commission in association with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and was funded by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). UNESCO funded technical assistance from the Press Foundation of Asia (PFA).

The main objective of the seminar was to increase media support for, and participation in population efforts in the Pacific, and specifically:

- increase appreciation and understanding of population concepts and issues among media professionals;
- provide participants with up-to-date information on the population situation, trends and targets; and the potential, actual and desired effect(s) of population on development;
- upgrade the knowledge and skills of media professionals in sourcing population-related data and developing print and broadcast materials on population and development that are interesting, accurate and easy to understand; and
- promote regional participation in the planning of media training programmes.

The meeting was officially opened by Mr Vaasatia Poloma Komiti, Deputy Director of Programmes of the South Pacific Commission (SPC), following introductory remarks by Dr Sundat Balkaran, SPC Demographer, Dr Allan Kondo, Regional Adviser for Population Education, UNESCO, and Mr Dieter Ehrhardt, UNFPA Director for the South Pacific.

II. AGENDA

Monday 26 February

Official opening
 Orientation and workshop objectives and mechanics
 Presentation of country reports
 Presentation: An overview of population and development in the Pacific
 Open forum
 Group discussion: Needs/gaps in population reporting in the Pacific
 Plenary: Presentation of group reports

Tuesday 27 February

Presentation: The language of demography
 Open forum
 Presentation: The economics of population and development in the Pacific
 Open forum
 Exercise
 Presentation and critique of results of exercise
 Presentation: Humanising statistics
 Open forum
 Presentation: Sources, quality and uses of population and development data
 Open forum

Wednesday 28 February

Presentation: Adolescent sexuality
 Open forum
 Presentation: Concerns of special population groups in the Pacific
 Open forum
 Presentation: AIDS/HIV
 Open forum
 Presentation: Family planning facts and fallacies
 Open forum
 Group discussions: Leads and story ideas for media materials on population and development
 Presentation/exercises: Clear and effective communication:
 - review of basic principles and some techniques of communication and clear/effective writing;
 - use of graphics, art forms, etc.
 Open forum
 Briefing on field visit

Thursday 1 March

Field visit
 Plenary: Sharing of participants' observations on the field visit
 Individual/team work

Friday 2 March

Plenary: Presentation and critique of output
 Individual/team work: Revision and finalisation of outputs
 Media training in the Pacific
 Group discussions: Recommendations for improving population and development reporting in the Pacific, press conferences, press releases, etc.
 Plenary: Presentation and consolidation of group recommendations
 Plenary: Presentation of action plan on population and development reporting
 Workshop synthesis and evaluation
 Closing session

III. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

1. In his opening remarks concerning the theme of this seminar, Dr Allan Kondo, Regional Adviser for Population, UNESCO, developed the observation that in reporting on population matters there was likely to be a conflict between what was important and necessary to understanding the population situation and what was sensational or merely of ephemeral interest to a small group of people. To a newspaper editor, for instance, concerned to maintain his readership, the latter was likely to take precedence over the former. However, the general public needed to be made aware of population-related problems such as unemployment, malnutrition, homelessness, crime and pollution. The point needed to be made that problems such as these, which were felt by every newspaper reader to affect their lives, had population-related causes i.e. there were too many people relative to the space and resources available to support them.
2. Dr Kondo noted that media people themselves needed to understand the dynamics of population and their multiple implications for society. He emphasised the power of the media, for good or bad, and that they could be a very effective means of informing the public, especially if issues were given effective, wide and frequent coverage. Two population-related 'stories' that had received this kind of coverage recently and that were now widely appreciated were the 'greenhouse effect' and the AIDS problem. Before the media could make people aware of connections between population, development and quality of life, the media professionals must be aware of the issues. Only then could they ask the right questions, gather relevant information, alert the public to population-related issues, make the problems visible and influence public opinion. This was the most important reason for this seminar.
3. Dr Kondo said that the seminar was a population education activity in its own right and that UNESCO was pleased to co-operate with the SPC and UNFPA in this activity.
4. Mr Dieter Ehrhardt, UNFPA Director for the South Pacific, thanked UNESCO and SPC for their co-operation in making this seminar possible; he also extended his thanks to the New Zealand Government for agreeing that the seminar could be held in Auckland and the Press Foundation of Asia and the New Zealand Family Planning Association for their practical assistance. He drew attention to the recently held 'International Forum on Population in the 21st Century' and its theme 'A better life for future generations'. This Forum made a special effort to call on the press and other media to play a central role in the creation of awareness of population-related issues, including the significance of individual decisions for collective well-being.
5. In his opening address, Mr Vaasatia Poloma Komiti, SPC Deputy Director of Programmes, welcomed the participants from the South Pacific countries, consultants and observers to the seminar. He noted that population and development problems were formidable in many Pacific Island nations, with fertility, mortality and morbidity all persisting at levels that remained too high, while uncontrolled migration was a cause for great concern. He observed that the narrow resource base of most South Pacific countries, combined with these population problems, had severe negative implications for the alleviation of poverty, employment, housing, health care, education, food supplies, natural resources and the environment.
6. The Deputy Director of Programmes suggested that the perception that expanding populations were not always an asset and that the demographic forces were sometimes an obstacle to the achievement of social and economic development objectives was becoming more widespread. The mass media in the Pacific had a vital role to play in supporting social and economic development programmes and strategies in the region and in creating a public awareness of policies and programmes, as well as new attitudes and practices consistent with national population and development goals. He hoped that the Seminar would contribute significantly to better and more thorough coverage of population and development issues in the Pacific media.
7. Orientation on seminar objectives and administrative arrangements was given by Mr Detlef Blumel, SPC Regional Media Centre, Suva, Fiji.
8. Mr Mateaki Heimuli of Tonga was elected Chairman and Mr Deldis Welly of the Federated States of Micronesia Vice-Chairman.

9. Country reports, covering the demographic situation and role of the media, were presented by the Representatives of American Samoa, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Vanuatu and Western Samoa.

10. The seminar was characterised from the beginning by an informal organisation and format. Open forums and plenary sessions for the presentation of group reports on the day's work occurred each day. Group discussions and writing and presentation exercises were also held, to improve the participants' ability to observe, digest, write and present materials clearly.

11. The first of the working papers 'An overview of population and development in the Pacific', was presented by Drs Martin Bakker, University of the South Pacific, Suva. He discussed this theme in terms of the four elements needed to complete a comprehensive description of any demographic situation:

- The current (or at least recent) demographic characteristics, as derived from a decennial census for instance;
- the working of demographic processes (fertility, mortality and migration) over time;
- The causes of change in demographic characteristics over time, i.e. the determinants of fertility, mortality and migration; and
- The consequences of demographic change over time on the nature of a population and on related aspects such as the economic, social, cultural and technological character of the population.

12. The paper then reviewed the major characteristics of the Pacific Island region, noting such aspects as the change wrought by 'modernisation', the changing rates of population growth over time, migration (both internal and international), changing fertility and mortality (including infant mortality) and their effect upon the age and sex profiles of Pacific countries.

13. The first day ended with a group discussion on 'The needs and gaps in population reporting in the Pacific'. The objective of this discussion was to identify the difficulties that media and programme professionals have in generating useful, accurate and stimulating material on population and development. Discussion centred upon the problems of obtaining reliable data and of being able to interpret them even when they were obtainable. Greater interaction between media and programme people was seen as necessary to deal with this problem, as the subject matter was often too complex for media people to interpret unaided. Perceived barriers to the media using population materials included traditional attitudes, language problems and sensitivity of churches to some of the topics. It was suggested that the media would be helped if programme agencies issued more newsletters, for instance, written in a style which media people could understand more easily than the typical census report.

14. The second day of the seminar began with another presentation by Drs Bakker on 'The language of demography'. He reviewed some of the pertinent theories of population that have affected policies and aid programmes since the Second World War. The modernisation theory, the dependency theory and the basic needs approach were reviewed and their effects assessed. The role of population in development planning in the Pacific was also reviewed and on the whole was found to be inadequate in most development plans written for Pacific Island countries.

15. Presentation of a working paper 'The economics of population and development in the Pacific' by Dr Peter Pirie followed. This paper examined some of the forces, mainly economic, working on the population of Pacific Island countries and propelling the current changes. Most Pacific Island countries must be classified as 'Third World' economically and this paper examined some of the methods that the Pacific Island peoples, their governments and other agencies and governments were using to lift them out of this situation. The Migration-Remittances-Aid-Dependent-Bureaucracies condition applying to some countries was reviewed, as was the situation arising out of the view of these countries as victims of 'dependency'. Low return from traditional and partially modified agriculture was identified as being a major cause of migration and urbanisation.

16. The SPC Demographer gave a presentation 'Sources, quality and uses of population and development data', in which he identified the major sources of data available to the media. He identified three main sources, the most important one being population census reports which most countries issue every five or ten years. These were usually the most comprehensive sources, covering such matters as population distribution, age and sex, economic activity and educational status. They were often presented in indigestible formats and the tabular materials could take practice and skill to interpret accurately. There were other types of census too, of housing and agriculture, for example. Sample surveys were a second source and might cover such matters as household expenditure or employment. The third was the administrative sources such as Government departments. Vital statistics were the main form of demographic information to be derived from this source, but there were several others such as education and health statistics. The SPC Demographer noted that there needed to be far more interaction between data producers and data users and cited the need for the two to develop and improve dialogue.

17. Day Three began with a presentation on 'Adolescent sexuality' by three representatives of the Auckland Education Unit of the New Zealand Family Planning Association, Ms Debbie Hager, Ms Sally Hughes and Mrs Barbara Lusk. The objectives of the presentation were to identify issues in adolescent sexuality and to demonstrate effective teaching strategies for sexuality education. The difference between 'sex' (physical) and 'sexuality' (mental) was discussed. The difference between traditional attitudes to adolescent sexuality and the reality of adolescent sexual behaviour in the 1990s were examined and the need to understand the concerns of adolescents and respond to them appropriately in the programmes was also reviewed. Although this session was based on New Zealand experience and norms, and no doubt came as something of an eye-opener to many Pacific Island participants, all seemed to enjoy the presentation and responded positively.

18. The concerns of special groups, identified for this meeting as women, youth and the disabled, were addressed by three speakers: the SPC Women's Programmes Development Officer (English), the SPC Assistant Youth Development Officer and Mrs Fanaura Kingstone of the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre (EPOC).

19. Women in the Pacific were seen as disadvantaged in the area of communication by having fewer opportunities for education and exposure to life outside traditional society and yet being obliged to comprehend communication messages formulated by the elite for the elite. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the messages were not perceived in the manner expected by the senders.

20. It was pointed out that youth formed a very high proportion of most Pacific Island populations, up to half in several instances, and, if properly harnessed, could be a vital element in the development process. The media could be a powerful force in the socialisation of youth and, for this reason, the way they handled crucial matters such as population needed to be examined critically. There was likely to be some conflict between the messages aimed at youth by the media concerning matters such as population, family life or contraception and the traditional values and heritage of the local society.

21. The plight of the disabled was dramatically drawn to the attention of the seminar by Mrs Kingstone. It was estimated (for good data do not exist) that the disabled were about 10 per cent of most populations in the Pacific. In many Pacific Island countries they were virtually ignored by the media and by the planning authorities at the local and national levels. At the international level more was being done, but the application of this effort was still not well handled in most Pacific Island countries.

22. Dr Allan Kondo gave a presentation on the AIDS/HIV situation generally and in the Pacific specifically. He noted that there were over 200,000 cases of AIDS world-wide (to December 1989) of which only a small number occurred in the Pacific Islands (Fiji 2; French Polynesia 8; New Caledonia 2; Papua New Guinea 13; and Tonga 2). It was likely that 5-10 million persons were infected with HIV already. He noted that there were apparently only three avenues of infection: sexual intercourse with an infected person, blood transmission and perinatal transmission. Casual contact between persons, even if infected, did not transmit the virus. However, the relatively low occurrence in the Pacific would not necessarily continue, since several countries on the Pacific rim with which the Island countries were in constant contact (e.g. USA, Australia, Canada and New Zealand) had high rates. Some Asian countries were also at high risk.

23. The last working paper, presented by Dr S. Katoanga of the World Health Organization, was on the topic of 'Family planning: rumours and misconceptions versus facts'. The paper discussed the various definitions of family planning and explained the adoption by the 1974 World Population Conference in Bucharest of the following definition: 'All couples and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children, and have the information, education and means to do so. The response of couples and individuals to this right takes into account the need for their living and future children and their responsibilities toward the community'. He also reviewed some the myths and folklore about contraception and described the major methods employed. The need to design a multi-media campaign to provide consistent information was cited and the use of satisfied couples as communicators to the unconvinced recommended.

24. The fourth day was mainly spent on field visits and follow-up observations. The participants and observers were divided into three groups and each visited different places in Auckland City to observe activities, including information strategies:

- The New Zealand AIDS Foundation;
- Seddon High School (which has a high proportion of Pacific Island students) and the Pacific Islands Women's Health Education Centre;
- The New Zealand Family Planning Association Clinic and the Youth Resource Centre run by the Auckland City Council. After the visit, the participants were required to write up their observations of the institutions they observed.

25. The final day was devoted to the presentation and critique of the participants' media work and to the development of recommendations for improving population and development reporting in the Pacific, press conferences and press releases. A closing session concluded the week, which participants judged useful and successful.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The seminar developed the following recommendations for improving population and development reporting in the Pacific:

Recommendation No. 1

Specialist training in handling population and development issues should be made available to media personnel who wish to extend their capabilities in this direction.

Recommendation No. 2

Facilities should be established which will enable media personnel and population and development programme personnel to have regular contact and opportunities to interact (e.g. co-ordinating groups, liaison offices, and more joint seminars such as the present one).

Recommendation No. 3

Media participants in this seminar should spread the population message among media colleagues in their own countries.

Recommendation No. 4

Media specialists should work on ways of using population and development themes more effectively. Media heads may need to be persuaded to make more space and time available for these themes. Innovative methods of presentation need to be developed and tried out, to make presentations more comprehensible.

Recommendation No. 5

Target groups, both those who need to receive the population message (e.g. youth, young mothers, opinion readers) and those concerned with developing the messages, (e.g. health departments, family planning associations, churches and development agencies), need to be identified and contacts developed so the messages can be made more effective.

Recommendation No. 6

Specific time limits need to be set in which the above recommendations can be implemented.

V. LIST OF DOCUMENTS

- ✓1. Women, population information and the media (paper presented by the Secretariat)
- ✓2. Information Paper for the WINAP Workshop on the Management of Women's Information Centres, Port Vila, 13-24 November 1989 (paper presented by the Secretariat)
3. Sources, quality and uses of population and development data (paper presented by the Secretariat)
4. The concerns of special population groups: youths (paper presented by the Secretariat)
5. The economics of population and development in the Pacific (paper presented by the Secretariat)
- ✓6. Populations of the South Pacific: An overview of population and development in the Pacific (paper presented by Drs Martin Bakker, University of the South Pacific)
- ✓7. Adolescent sexuality (paper presented by the New Zealand Family Planning Association)
- ✓8. Disability in the Pacific: a point of view (paper presented by Ms F. Kingstone, ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre)
9. Family planning: rumours and misconceptions versus facts (paper presented by Dr S.F. Katoanga, World Health Organization)
10. Implications of population growth on development, Book 3 - (paper presented by Press Foundation of Asia (Manila); Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting (Kuala Lumpur); UNESCO Regional Population Communication Unit (Kuala Lumpur))
- ✓11. Integration: a key notion in ILO's South Pacific Population and Family Life Education Programme (paper presented by the International Labour Organization).

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