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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

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Item 6(c) of the Provisional Agenda

THE COMMISSION'S PROGRAMMES FOR THE  
PALESTINIAN ARAB PEOPLE

(Note of the Executive Secretary)

80-3139

## PART ONE

### I. Introduction

The Commission, in follow-up to resolution 12(II) - according permanent observer status to the Palestine Liberation Organization and inviting it to participate in its activities - adopted resolution 27(III) approving a broad outline for a comprehensive study to be carried out by the secretariat (E/ECWA/32/Add.1). Such a study was to cover "The Economic and Social Situation and Potential of the Palestinian Arab People in the region of Western Asia". The General Assembly, considering the Commission's budget for 1976-1977, made available an amount of \$ 59,560 for the Study, while the Government of Qatar provided a contribution of \$ 142,758. However, the total cost of the Study was originally envisaged to amount to \$ 306,241. Following the secretariat's progress report (E/ECWA/59/Add.1) on the implementation of resolution 27(III), the Commission adopted resolution 53(V) requesting the secretariat to submit to the sixth session of the Commission, further details on the financial requirements for completing the Study.

In follow-up to resolution 53(V), the secretariat reported (E/ECWA/76) that \$ 77,200 had been requested under the United Nations budget 1980-1981 and that, as far as could be assessed at that time, a further \$ 124,800 would be needed as extrabudgetary resources. The secretariat also pointed out that with the appointment of a study director (15 March 1979), extensive consultations were to be held with the objective of focussing the Study and clarifying in more specific terms its operational procedures and objectives in the light of various limitations including financial ones. On the basis of reassessment, the secretariat wishes to report the following as at 29 February 1980.

### III. Progress in the implementation of resolution 27(III)

#### A. Interim measures

The actual implementation of resolution 27(III) could obviously not proceed without the appointment of qualified professional staff as provided for under the original budget for the Study. Thus, during the period preceding the appointment of a study director on 15 March 1979, the secretariat was in a position to only make very limited progress in initiating the Study. For this purpose, the secretariat formed a task force in January 1977 which deliberated the scope and limitations of the Study as well as the practical steps to be taken to carry it out. In addition, the task force initiated several preliminary steps with regard to some basic components of the comprehensive study.

These included:

- (i) a survey of the relevant and available literature;
- (ii) a working paper on the demography of the Palestinians;
- (iii) a survey of the social, cultural and educational institutions of the PLO; and,
- (iv) a survey of the legal status of the Palestinians in selected Arab countries.

Although the task force provided very useful inputs to the study in terms of practical policy and operational aspects, its work could only be capitalized upon with the appointment of the study director in March 1979. For all practical purposes this date is to be considered as the actual take-off date for the Study.

#### B. Progress since March 1979

1. Since the mandate of resolution 27(III) - as embodied in the adopted outline (E/ECWA/32/Add.1) - was very broad and considering the fact that there were no precedents to follow, realism and prudence dictated careful planning and wide consultations with individuals, the Palestine Liberation Organization and its institutions prior to the undertaking of any major research activities. Thus, extensive consultations were held with all concerned during the second quarter of 1979. These consultations led to a consensus that the original 15 months as envisaged under the implementation plan were not entirely realistic and that a minimum of 24 months would be required instead.

2. Steps were taken to fill all the remaining vacant established posts consisting of four professionals and one secretary. This was achieved by October 1979.

3. The survey of the extensive literature, begun earlier, was continued and made more inclusive.

4. A survey of other resources, research institutions and individuals with requisite expertise was also undertaken. As a result, working relationships were established with the Palestine Liberation Organization and its institutions such as the Planning Centre, the Research Centre and the Computer Section. Close contact was also established with the Institute for Palestine Studies.

5. During the period June - September 1979, preparations for the field surveys were undertaken. A base questionnaire was developed and utilized in pretesting with 60 families as to determine its validity, reliability, as well as its administration requirements. The questionnaire was designed to provide information not otherwise available, thus supplementing the library research.

During this period simultaneous planning for the field surveys was also in progress. A specialist in sampling techniques was employed by the secretariat as a consultant for this purpose. Because of time and financial constraints, the secretariat considered that surveys in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, and by mail in the USA, would be adequate.

6. During the period September - December 1979, intensive library research was undertaken using material available in the Palestine Liberation Organization's Research Centre, the Institute for Palestine Studies, and American and Lebanese Universities. This research concentrated on pre-1948 Palestine (Part II of the outline) so as to establish a base line against which the post-1948 economic and social situation could be evaluated. Review and research of the available literature on this part of the Study (both official and non-official sources) which is quite substantial and involving the senior research staff full-time was concluded. A working draft of part II of the Study was completed in January 1980.

7. Simultaneously with the above activities, continued development of the technical file for the field surveys was in progress. The technical file includes questionnaires, coding, tabulations, manuals for enumerators and coders, and results of pretesting. The pretesting has been completed and in light of its results and the suggestions of various concerned parties, including the staff of the Palestine Statistical Office (in Damascus) and the Palestine Liberation Organization's Computer Section (in Beirut), the basic questionnaire will be revised and the coding and tabulations (yielding over 200 tables) be brought up-to-date. In addition, manuals have been prepared in draft.

8. Work is now in progress on a study of the economy of the West Bank, completion of earlier surveys of Palestine Liberation Organization's social educational and cultural institutions and of the role of women in Palestinian affairs and of the status quo of Palestinians in the countries within the ECMA region, and completion of the technical file.

### III. Relevant implementation aspects

#### A. Recruitment of project personnel

The implementation of the resolution has been affected by delays in recruitment of project personnel. In view of the nature of the Study, the identification of suitable and acceptable project staff, particularly, presented a problem. Thus, in spite of the special efforts of the secretariat it was not until 15 March 1979 that a study director could be appointed. Consequently, crucial steps pertaining to design of the study and its surveys could only be taken upon his appointment.

B. Operational dimensions of the study

In order to determine the scope of the Study in operational terms, the type of samples, etc. it is important that from the outset precise definitions are established. In this connexion, the notion of "potential", which is a primary determinant of the scope of the Study, is not well defined in the available literature, especially, for the social area. Thus, under the best of circumstances, the construction of a model of the "social potential" of a country or a community is not an easy proposition. It is, however, obvious that the construction of such a model would need to benefit from extensive field surveys. Consequently, such field surveys in "any Arab country with a community of over 5000 Palestinians" would constitute the core of the comprehensive study. Hence, sampling design and techniques and the administration of questionnaires including their computerization are important tools of the Study. These dimensions were considerably underestimated in the original outline both in terms of financial as well as substantive requirements. A rescheduling of the activities originally envisaged was deemed necessary to remedy this situation.

C. Financial constraints

Upon the appointment of a study director and following the consultations held with concerned parties on the scope of the study and its field components, a consensus was reached that a further two-year period would be needed to complete the study. Subsequently, a revised cost plan allowing for a maximum number of surveys of "potential" of Palestinian Arab communities (through field work) was prepared.

1. Revised cost plan

(a) As a contribution to the Study, the General Assembly made available a total of \$ 89,200 under the 1980-1981 Programme Budget as temporary assistance allowing for the services of some project personnel for a limited period. This amount constitutes the reallocation of the amount (plus increase due to inflation) previously available under the 1976-1977 budget but which was only partly utilised. (\$ 13,092);

(b) The revised cost plan further indicated that extrabudgetary resource requirements amounting to \$ 588, 285 - would have to cover the greater part of the staff establishment during the two-year period; consultancies; field survey and analysis staff; travel of project personnel as well as general operating expenses including administrative charges;

(c) Total requirements for the study were thus estimated at \$ 677,485 as of 15 March 1979 not including the amount of \$ 13,092 which was spent on activities prior to the project becoming operational.

2. Resources allocated to the study and status of allotments

Until 29 February 1980, the status of allotments pertaining to resources allocated to the Study was as follows:

	<u>Allocated</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>
- United Nations Budget 1976-1977	\$ 13,092	\$ 13,092
- Government of Qatar	\$142,758	\$142,758
- United Nations Budget 1980-1981	\$ 89,200	\$ 26,463
- United Nations Fund for Population Activities	\$ 53,600	-
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Total=	\$298,650	\$182,313
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PART TWO

1. The available statistics on the Palestinian Arab People are characterized by incompleteness and inaccuracy. The fact that a census of the Palestinian Arab People has not taken place since 1931, that the Palestinians are dispersed in a number of Arab and non-Arab countries, and that a significant number of Palestinians have acquired the citizenship of other countries, have all contributed to the absence of adequate demographic and socio-economic information about this population. Given these and other circumstances, a census of the Palestinian Arab People is greatly needed. Such a census would not only provide basic data and information on the Palestinians, it would also contribute to the preservation of the national identity of this people.
2. The Arab states, particularly those of Western Asia, have recognized these needs, and have adopted on more than one occasion recommendations calling on the United Nations and UNFPA to conduct a census of the Palestinian Arab People. For example, at the UN/UNFPA Post World Population Conference Consultation for the ECWA region (Doha, 24-25 March 1975, Beirut, 1-2 May 1975) the participants recommended "... that ECWA, in co-operation with the Arab states and concerned Palestinian institutions, conduct a comprehensive survey regarding the distribution of the Arab Palestinian People inside and outside the region and the demographic and economic characteristics of this people".
3. Again the Arab League Conference on Population Activities in the Arab States (Cairo, 21-22 May 1975) recommended that the "... United Nations Fund for Population Activities respond to the requests put by the Palestine Liberation Organization in connexion with the implementation of population projects, including the related studies and necessary services for the Palestinians within their occupied homeland and beyond".
4. Most important perhaps, the member States of ECWA once more reaffirming their resolution to conduct a census of the Palestinian Arab People adopted at ECWA's third session (14 May 1976) recommendation No. III/28 in which they



Although during the 1976-77 & 1978-79 budget periods only \$155,850 was available for a study with a total resource requirement of \$ 690,577 the original mandate, outline and the sequence of its implementation was generally adhered to. Consequently, in view of the serious resource constraints, delays resulted in carrying out the study as originally envisaged. Essential consultancies pertaining to statistics, sampling and design could not be commissioned as originally scheduled delaying the finalization of questionnaires, while field surveys had to be postponed. These financial constraints did not only delay the implementation of the resolution but also prevented granting contracts to the project staff. This situation was not conducive to the execution of the project under the best conditions possible.

#### IV. Prospects for completion of study

Work pertaining to the technical file will be completed, while only very limited research activities can be carried out with the remaining fund under the regular budget. Funds made available by the UNFPA are intended for pre-field survey activities only. Thus, the core of the project namely its field surveys and their analysis remain problematic in view of the inadequate resources.

As explained above, the completion of the Study in accordance with its approved terms of reference will require an additional amount of approximately \$ 392,000.

urged the UNFPA to furnish material support for implementation of a census and called upon the Executive Secretary to take all necessary steps, " in close co-operation with the PLO" for undertaking the census as soon as possible. Finally, at its fifth session in October 1978 the Commission adopted draft resolution 58/V on Census of the Palestinian Arab People in which it again urged UNFPA to finance the census, and called upon member States to offer all the facilities that could assist ECWA in successfully implementing this project and called upon the Executive Secretary to follow up on the implementation of the resolution in co-operation with the PLO.

5. In response to these recommendations and resolutions UNFPA and ECWA have undertaken the following steps:

(1) A meeting of experts was held in Damascus from 6 to 9 June 1977 on "Census of the Palestinian Arab People" which brought together representatives of the PLO, a selection of Arab statisticians and demographers and representatives of Arab institutions specializing in Palestinian studies in addition to ECWA experts. The meeting discussed and resolved major technical problems facing the implementation of the census. This meeting was financed by UNFPA.

(2) A project request was prepared by ECWA in co-operation with the PLO and presented to UNFPA in March 1978. Approval in principle of the project and the funding of the preliminary steps were received in October 1978 and additional funding of these preliminary steps received in March 1979. Considering the magnitude and complexity of the project UNFPA approval was quite expeditious.

(3) A census expert was appointed and began working on 16 July 1979.

(4) In co-operation with the PLO, an advisory committee (AD/COM) was formed in August of that year composed of the representative of the PLO, a representative of ECWA, the census expert and personalities in the region who would join the committee as required. The aim of the committee is to discuss with the various Arab governments methods of co-operation with ECWA in the implementation of this project. The committee has already negotiated with the Government of Jordan; it included at that time the Minister of Labour of Jordan, Mr. Issam Ajlouni.

(5) A technical advisory committee (TAC) was also formed composed of the Director General of the Department of Statistics of Jordan, Director of the Central Bureau of Statistics of Syria, a representative of the PLO and the census expert. The committee has met several times since its inception and has reached agreements on various technical matters including the standard tabulations required for the census of Palestinians.

(6) The population census of Jordan took place in November 1979 and information on households whose head was born in Palestine were obtained. This information was appropriately coded and could be processed by the end of 1980. Negotiations are now at an advanced stage to include the appropriate questions and to obtain the appropriate tabulations from the population census of Syria which is scheduled to take place towards the end of this year. Similar negotiations are now being initiated with Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.

6. Future steps include obtaining needed information on the Palestinian Arab People in Arab countries which are not undertaking a census presently and from non-Arab countries where significant concentrations of Palestinians exist.

7. In general, technical difficulties have been surmounted and if the co-operation of the countries concerned, particularly inside of the region, is obtained, the census operations should be completed by the end of 1982 as originally foreseen.