

Statistical training in Africa: a case of teaching demographic statistics

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Abstract: Statistical training in Africa started in early 1960s and was followed by demographic training in Africa following attainment of political independence to various countries in the region. The demographic training, initially funded by UNFPA, has consisted of undergraduate degrees, post graduate diplomas, masters, doctorates and post doctorates at regional and national institutions as well as centres found outside the continent. Achievements of the training programme over several decades have included many demographic statisticians trained and helping in implementing the population related projects in the region and building capacity of several African demographic training centres. Challenges have consisted of inadequate financial support from development partners and regional and national governments, lack of scholarships for students, scarce research grants for staff and students, development partners' related issues, problems related to national and regional governments, lack of interest in supporting training of technical demographers, limitation of infrastructure for training, shortage of qualified trainers and unemployment of trained demographic statisticians. It is recommended that national governments and regional agencies provide core financing of African demographic training centres and only mobilize donor funding as supplementary. More focus should be directed to advanced research training to ensure that qualified demographic statisticians lost to brain drain and other factors are continuously replaced. African training institutions need to be more innovative and create new opportunities of sustainability when the support being received is stopped.