

THIRD WORLD HEALTH STATISTICS

Two meetings have been held of the health group, at which a project on third world health has been discussed. We have made contact with the major campaigning aid agencies, and found interest in the idea of some statistical input. Particular points raised included the adequacy of indicators used by, for example, the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the World Health Organisation, and the linking of data on occupational health risks. It seemed also that a guide to where to find information would be useful, and this suggested the idea of an 'Unofficial Guide to Third World Health Statistics'. This would be a guide to sources and a critique of concepts used in their compilation. Possible sections could cover:

- World statistical sources (World Bank, UN, WHO etc)
- Regional sources
- Some selected national sources
- Single-topic sources (demography, nutrition etc)
- Under-registration, coverage and accuracy
- Appropriateness of indicators used
- Comparability between sources

We have made some preliminary investigations, and whereas the statistics produced by world bodies would seem to be clearly in need of a critical guide, our experience of trying to find our own way around the national statistics of individual countries was not encouraging. Statistics on particular topics such as occupational health are more often based on one-off surveys than on official statistics. Discussions will continue at forthcoming health group meetings. Anyone interested is invited to come to the meetings or contact Steve Bennett (home 01-550 1945).

Editor note (for what it's worth) there is an excellent programme of research being funded by the American SSRC called The Political Economy of Health and Disease. Contact Prof Ben WILNER Dept of Geography, Univ of Wisconsin at MADISON

