



United Nations Regional on the 2020 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses: International Standards and Contemporary Technologies

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
25 – 28 June 2018

Conclusions and recommendations

1. The workshop was conducted with the support of the Department of Statistics Malaysia and the UNFPA office in Malaysia. Representatives, population and housing census methodologists and managers from Cambodia, China, China Macao SAR, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Timor-Leste participated in the workshop. During the opening session, the workshop was addressed by Dato' Sri Dr. Mohd Uzir Mahidin, Chief Statistician of Malaysia, Ms. Marcela Suazo, Country Director of UNFPA-Malaysia and the representative of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). The workshop was chaired on separate days by Ms. Siti Haslinda Mohd Din, Director, Division of Data Management and Integration, Department of Statistics Malaysia, Ms. Marilyn Estrada, Regional Director, Philippine Statistics Authority and Mr. Srdjan Mrkic, Chief, Demographic Statistics Section, UNSD.
2. The participants expressed their appreciation for the organization of the workshop and emphasized that it was very timely taking into consideration the momentum that is being built in regard to the implementation of the ECOSOC Resolution on the 2020 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses, stipulating that each Member State conducts at least one population and housing census in the period 2015-2024.
3. In that context, the participants outlined that the workshop is timely also from the point of view of the adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the role it assigns to statistics in general and population and housing censuses in particular.
4. The workshop welcomed the revised version of the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* as well as the revised *Handbook on the Management of Population and Housing Censuses*. The participants re-iterated that the *Principles and Recommendations* represents a cornerstone for national census planning and implementation of the 2020 round of population and housing censuses. They also recognized that in the context of regional activities, full compliance with the concepts and recommendations contained in these volumes has become of utmost importance.
5. The workshop also noted with appreciation the draft of the *Guidelines on the Use of Electronic Data Collection Technologies in Population and Housing Censuses*, as well as the draft *Handbook on Measuring International Migration through Population Censuses*, recognizing their value for the preparation and conduct of censuses in the 2020 census round. All four volumes were introduced and their contents elaborated during the workshop.
6. The workshop took copious note of, and expressed appreciation for the global, regional and national level activities presented by UNSD and the United Nations Population Fund in pursuance of implementing the 2020 World Programme of Population and Housing Censuses. The participants welcomed this coordinated initiative and the efforts invested by the contributing partners, both in the context of providing internationally adopted methodological framework for conducting population and housing censuses and in

the context of directly supporting efforts to enhance and build national capacities in the field of census-taking. In that context, the workshop noted the importance and significance of South-South cooperation and expressed expectations for using it to a full extent in the 2020 round of censuses for exchanging country experience and capacity building.

7. The workshop noted that participating countries intend to employ different methods for conducting population and housing censuses in the 2020 round, ranging from the traditional paper-based canvasser approach to the use of combined paper and tablet based data collection, to the use of internet and tablet computers combined. Recognizing the advantages of the use of contemporary technologies for conducting population and housing censuses, primarily the use of tablet computers and geo-spatial technologies, the workshop encouraged those participating countries that are still considering their main data collection method to take these advantages into consideration while making the final decision.
8. For countries in the region that have opted for the multi-mode collection method with a view to improving coverage and reducing cost, it was recognized that the multi-mode collection method increases operational complexity and requires sophisticated response tracking methods to minimize duplications and nonresponse. It was further emphasized that the data collection design needs to be optimized for such type of collection exercise to manage mode effects and data comparability issues.
9. The workshop concluded that several participating countries indicated their continued interest and efforts in using administrative sources of data for the supporting census activities as well as census evaluation. They also noted the many challenges in this regard, including discrepancies in definitions and concepts leading to inconsistencies with international standards; accuracy of the data; the completeness and the coverage of the existing registers; and the legal framework.
10. Participants noted with particular interest the list of core topics for population and housing censuses as recommended in the *Principles and Recommendations* and concluded that for the most part the topics scheduled to be collected in participating countries correspond to the internationally recommended ones. A concern was raised by the participants in regard to the newly revised definition of work and the workshop concluded that there is a need for additional clarification regarding the implementation of the revised concept and urged UNSD to liaise with ILO in that respect.
11. Discussing the significance of population and housing censuses in terms of measuring international migration in the 2020 round, the participants underlined that the 2010 round provided a sound basis for assessing and developing the most suitable approaches, taking into full consideration the international recommendations regarding the topics of place of previous residence and duration of residence. The workshop also noted that in some of the participating countries the issue of internal migration and “floating populations” are of an even more paramount importance and will be specifically targeted in the 2020 round of censuses.
12. The majority of the countries in the region have experience in using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) in smaller surveys and field tests, and have refined their processes and procedures first before making a decision to use them in their censuses. The participants highlighted the importance of building capacity and expertise in the national statistical offices and using an incremental approach to the adoption of new data collection technologies.
13. However, in certain countries the use of CAPI technology and tablet computers in surveys has been entirely dependent on the support by different development partners with each introducing different

software and management solutions and that this has adverse effects on the strategic development of national capacity.

14. The participants outlined that making a decision on whether or not to use electronic data collection technologies in censuses is of substantial importance and needs to be reached with the involvement of all potential stakeholders and early enough to afford sufficient preparatory time for testing. The decision should be made on the basis of detailed analysis of past experiences, demonstrated need, market research, comparative costs as well as capacity to employ the technologies.
15. The workshop underscored that one of the key challenges in employing a CAPI-based data collection refers to recruiting technologically skilled and computer-literate temporary field staff. The participants highlighted the importance of providing adequate training both on the content of the questionnaire and on the use of the device as well as providing sufficient technical support in the field. Another challenge was the need to develop alternative data transfer mechanisms and protocols in parts of the country where the communications infrastructure is lacking.
16. The workshop called attention to the issue of the cost of acquisition of tablets and their timely sourcing in sufficient quantity for CAPI-based data collection as well as to the challenges associated with the limited life of the devices and finding justifications for re-using the devices in subsequent data collection exercises and for other secondary purposes.
17. The participants underscored the numerous potential risks and challenges associated with data security and confidentiality when using CAPI- or Internet-based data collection. To keep census data secure and confidential, the participants recommended that multiple measures be taken to protect data while stored on electronic devices and during transit between devices and servers.
18. Several participating countries expressed their concerns about the uncertainty of budgetary resources potentially jeopardizing their plans and preparations for using tablets in their 2020 round census. They have acquired capacity and expertise as well as tested their CAPI applications and systems and yet are waiting on budgetary decisions. The workshop recommended that all efforts should be made by governments and development partners in terms of ensuring the timely availability of census budgets.
19. The workshop underscored the centrality of digital mapping to census operations utilizing electronic data collection technologies. The countries in the region have gained experience in the application of Geographical Information System (GIS) during the 2010 census round and in subsequent surveys. However, the workshop also noted that in several countries in the region, the use of GIS is not fully implemented and that may have adverse effects on the census in the 2020 round. In reference to the international recommendation on the necessity of producing geo-referenced small-area census statistics in the 2020 round, the workshop noted the importance of geo-coding, which is critical for enhancing the quality and utility of census results as well as for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of census operations. In that context, the workshop noted that several participating countries already achieved or are about to ensure geo-coding of each housing unit in the country - a necessary pre-condition for generating geo-referenced census statistics.
20. The workshop noted the relationship between population and housing censuses and the production of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators. It recognized that census statistics are critical for producing SDG indicators and that a number of indicators cannot be produced without census data in the

numerator or denominator. The workshop encouraged countries to conduct mapping exercises for SDG indicators in terms of data sources, availability, timeliness and frequency.

21. The workshop noted that quality assurance and quality control of all the segments of the population and housing census is elaborated in both the *Principles and Recommendations* and the *Handbook on Management*. In that context, it recommended that measures to ensure high quality of both processes and outputs need to be embedded in plans for population and housing censuses, with each subsequent phase of the census being initiated only when the previous one has met quality standards. In that context, comprehensive census quality assessment reports need to be produced by each country that undertakes a census in the 2020 round, following the quality assessment dimensions presented in the UNSD guidelines. Such assessments should also cover the use of geographic information and Geographic Information System (GIS) in the various phases of the census operation.
22. Furthermore, the workshop emphasized the importance of the post enumeration survey (PES) for assessing the coverage of population and housing censuses. It noted the difficulties in ensuring that the PES is conducted in an independent manner. The workshop also concluded that the results of the PES should be part and parcel of census statistics dissemination. For those countries with the practice of adjusting census results based on PES findings, the workshop noted the need to follow international recommendations in that respect.