Supporting Population and Housing Censuses Beyond 2020 Round

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UNSD activities on impact of COVID-19

- **Three surveys**
  - 1st survey in March/April 2020 to collect information on the implementation of 2020 censuses
  - 2nd survey: UNSD-World Bank collaboration, September 2020
  - 3rd survey in December 2020/January 2021 to collect information on the implementation of censuses in 2020 and 2021

- **Expert Group Meeting in 9-12 February in 2021**
  - To discuss potential problem
  - To assess the impact of the pandemic on data quality
    - More than 100 experts from 24 countries and international organizations participated
Challenges in conducting censuses under the pressure of the pandemic

- Conducting censuses as scheduled
  - About 75 percent of countries that planned to conduct their censuses in 2020 or 2021 had to postpone to late 2021 or 2022 or beyond
  - Countries which conducted their censuses in 2020, either had to extend the duration of enumeration or relied only on administrative registers

- Requirement to reduce face-to-face interview (paper or electronic) due to the pandemic

- Data quality concerns
  - Extending the duration of enumeration, sometimes more than six months
  - Difficulties to reach people at their place of residence
  - High risk for enumeration of people living in institutional places, homeless, ....
  - Unwillingness to participate in censuses during the pandemic
Challenges in conducting censuses under the pressure of the pandemic

- Need for additional budget for:
  - new modes of data collection (developing and testing);
  - procurement of personal protective equipment (PPEs) for field staff;
  - enhanced publicity campaign to inform public about the pandemic;
  - Online training for the field staff

- Comparability of census results with previous censuses, due to
  - changes in questionnaire data items
  - Extending the duration of enumeration (recall effect);
  - changes in methods of data collection (multi-mode data collection, new method for collecting data)
  - The effect of the pandemic on census measures, such as international/internal migration, unemployment rate
Recommendations on possible modifications in census procedures

- **Introducing self-enumeration data collection modes** to reduce direct contact to respondents
  - Online questionnaire (CAWI)
  - Paper-based self enumeration (PASI)
  - Telephone interview (CATI) - for non-response follow-up

- In most cases, face-to-face interview (CAPI and/or PAPI) is still necessary for enumeration of some population groups - such as homeless, people living in a remote area or rural areas and non-response follow-up

- **Extensive testing** is required before adjustments are made to the design of data collection methods

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Key requirements for CAWI:
- Building and dwelling register or list
- Reasonable assumptions about take-up rates
Possible modifications in census procedures

- Modifications in census questionnaire
  - Reducing census questions focusing on core topics, in order to shorten duration of the interview
  - Replacing census questionnaire with a short and long form

- Online management and monitoring system for field staff
- Online training for field staff
Possible modifications in census procedures

- Use of administrative registers for improving the quality of population count:
  - Improving census coverage
  - Imputing non-responding households
  - Adjusting population living in institutional places

Overall conclusions of the EGM

- Using administrative data and registers to replace the traditional census is accelerated by the difficulties caused by the pandemic and the accompanying costs
Moving towards register based censuses

- Necessary pre-conditions
  - Legal framework, role of NSO to be established
  - Public and stakeholder approval
  - Cooperation between NSO and register-owners
  - Knowledge of administrative registers (available information, quality of data, process of updating information)
  - Population register and other base registers
  - Unified identification system
  - Qualified and trained staff
Transition from traditional to a combined or register-based censuses

Main steps

• Constructing a statistical population register
• Linkage of data through a common identifier
• Data processing-editing, imputation and validations
• Updating regularly

Countries which do not have reliable population register use the combined census with full-field enumeration for:

• improving the accuracy of population count,
• Linking persons with their place of residence,
• validating, checking and updating the data derived from administrative sources
• adding new variables to census database
UNSD 2021 Plan

- Developing global guidelines for register-based censuses – one or two expert group meetings; deadline end of the year
- Initiate the work on the 2030 Round global Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses
- Develop curricula for workshops
- Continue monitoring and reporting on census-taking in the pandemic – a dashboard is available at: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/census/COVID-19/
- Provide technical assistance as requested by countries
- Finalize the technical report on the use of population and housing censuses and civil registration for generating SDGs
- Maintaining census topics database
This model represents a holistic approach to civil registration, vital statistics and identity management recommended by the United Nations, adapted from the United Nations Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3; it can be adjusted to national circumstances and governing structures as necessary.