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Lessons learned from censuses of the 2020 round

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Note by the Statistical Agency under the Office of the President of Uzbekistan*

Summary

This fact sheet highlights the process of conducting a pilot census in Uzbekistan, including problems encountered, lessons learned and conclusions, together with suggestions for improving the processes involved in conducting the first population census in the history of Uzbekistan since independence.

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I. Pilot census in Uzbekistan

1. Pursuant to Cabinet of Ministers Decree No. 710 of 11 November 2020 on measures to prepare for and conduct a population census in Uzbekistan, a pilot population census was carried out in November 2021.
2. Between 1 and 5 November 2021, it was possible to take part in the pilot census process online, through the Internet. Information was posted on all social media platforms to encourage active participation in the process.
3. Between 6 and 10 November 2021, lists were generated from the residential addresses of respondents who had completed the Internet survey; they were then sent to the regions involved in the pilot census, in order to avoid any double-counting.
4. Between 11 and 22 November 2021, specially trained enumerators went around the houses, completing the census forms on paper and, partly, using tablet devices.
5. Between 23 and 25 November 2021, a check was carried out of at least 10% of the registered residences in each enumeration area for control purposes.
6. An international observer mission visited Uzbekistan between 12 and 20 November 2021 to participate in the pilot census processes. According to the programme, the 11 members of the mission, divided into groups, familiarized themselves with the preparatory work and the processes used for conducting the pilot population census in four of the country's provinces.

II. Challenges

7. The following problems were encountered during the pilot census:
 - (a) During the pilot census, activities were organized to publicize the census in the media, on official websites and social networks and in local areas, but the population was not fully aware that it was taking place;
 - (b) Respondents objected strongly to some of the questions on the census forms;
 - (c) During the census period, 87 households refused to participate and no one opened the door in 2,922 households, although enumerators visited them more than three times. The information on the persons living in those dwellings was obtained on the basis of information available from the local authorities;
 - (d) The existence of a total of 1,102 disadvantaged households known for criminal activities in the four districts meant that the enumerators had to be accompanied by police officers during the trial census process, for their safety;
 - (e) Because of the short enumeration period (12 days), there were difficulties in completing the census work in a timely manner in some enumeration areas;
 - (f) In some mahallas, the cartographic materials for the area provided by the cadastral agency did not coincide with the situation on the ground.

III. Lessons learned

8. Despite the fact that the pilot population census was the first census to be conducted in Uzbekistan for many years, a great lesson has been learned and considerable experience has been gained as a result. In particular:
 - (a) The use of paper questionnaires entailed substantial financial resources for printing, significant effort for the logistics and storage space for both the blank forms and the completed questionnaires;
 - (b) Offices were set up in each training area for the duration of the pilot census. However, very few people actually went to the offices to take part in the census;

(c) Five days was too short a duration for the online census, as people were not aware that the census was available online.

IV. Conclusions and suggestions

9. Based on the above, we have come to the following conclusions:

(a) From the experience of using tablet devices for part of the pilot census, it would seem advisable to switch to tablet devices instead of paper forms for the interviews during the national census. It would also save money, as operatives would not have to be paid to enter primary census data into the electronic database;

(b) The census should be kept open online for at least 15 days to allow more people to complete the questionnaires by themselves online;

(c) The pilot census showed that respondents categorically refused to answer some of the questions in the pilot census programme, including those about sporting activities, income and the available assets of household members. It would therefore seem necessary to improve the questionnaires, with the participation of international experts;

(d) Census offices should be located in enumeration districts rather than in training areas;

(e) The cadastral agencies should prepare electronic maps of the mahallas using a geographic information system in order to ensure better preparation for and conduct of the census processes.
