

**Country paper for the fifth Management Seminar for
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1. Statistical information from population and housing censuses plays an important role in social-economic management and policy making of country. Population and housing censuses meet requirements from wide range-users, for example, population census provides basic information for the population estimates and detailed demographic and social-economic analysis of the population of country. The population census in Vietnam aims to collect accurate data on population and social labour forces for research and analysis of the country population development making, evaluation of implementation of population and labour-related task which lay ground for the social and economic development programme for 2010-2020. Especially data on population by provinces and cities that comes from population and housing census is used as basis for annual financial allocation from state budget to provinces and cities.

In order to meet comprehensive demand for population and housing data from wide range-users, in the preparation period of census, the General Statistics Office of Vietnam (GSO) always organizes the user's meeting to identify the scope and design of the census that involve a series of user. The meeting also serves as a forum to discuss with users topics that could be sensibly included in a national census.

Because of budget constrain for the census, the GSO can't give in all requirements of all kinds of user in the census. Over the years, national population census has covered an increasingly wide range of topics. For example, besides information collected in 1989 census on sex, age, ethnic group, educational level, demographic characteristics and economic activities, the 1999 census (the last one) has asked additional questions on religion, migration, housing, household facilities and ownership of means of production in rural households.

The scope of the population census is always a topic for intensive review and discussion. While on the one hand, the growth in demand for census data has place increasing pressures on the GSO, on the other hand the need to work within the budget and ensure overall accuracy place limitation on how far the scope of the census should

be expanded. In order to achieve a balance between different kinds of user and producer, the GSO hold regular discussion with potential census users and carry out a series of pretest to monitor cost and ensure that high quality of data should be maintained.

It is always a case that the users require far more data than possibly be provided by a census. In the case of 1999 population and housing census in Vietnam, for instance, among the specialized requests were for statistics: of craftsmen for the Central Union of Craftsmen; of the number of blind for the Association of the Blind, and of the number of technical and scientific workers for the Ministry of Labour, Invalid and Social Affairs; of the number of pensioners and amount received in pension and social welfare for the Ministry of Finance, etc. The exchanges of ideas in the meeting are useful in creating an awareness of the forthcoming census and in defining in broad term what it might achieve.

The data on population is basic for the production and distribution of national wealth of country. This kind of data is also needed by policy maker in setting up the long term social-economic development strategy of country. Thus, the long term role of the population census is to provide data for the Government in social-economic management and deveopment policy.

At present, the GSO are preparing the programme of national statistical census and survey and this programme is planned to submite to the Prime Minister for approval at the end of this year. This programme ensures the suitability among statistical censuses and surveys and it also makes a fitting the population census with other social and economic statistics.

2. What resources are available for use?

Conducting a population and housing census is a complex technical task and it is also very expensive in our country. So far, the General Statistics Office of Vietnam has conducted three national population censuses. The 1979 census was significant as the first attempt to count the population of the unified Vietnam. The second and third population census was conducted in the year of 1989 and 1999 respectively. The Government has been most generous in its support of the census, responding positively to meet urgent needs for resources. The census has also benefited greatly from the strong support from international organizations. The most of the external assistance was provided by the United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA) in financial support,

technical assistance and equipment. In cooperation with the General Statistics Office, UNFPA also assisted in obtaining additional resources from a number of donors, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Danish and Netherland Government. Much of these funds was utilised to support training, procure computing equipments and develop facilities to process and analyze census data and to disseminate the results of the census.

To enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the resources, drawing lesson learned from the previous census, the GSO developed a comprehensive plan and strategies for all operations. The initial focus was on critical areas for development, including the agreed contents and design of questionnaires, the identification of sample size for the survey, preparation of a master training plan, development of a census publicity programme, design of a census processing system and the recognition of the need to give urgent attention to issues related to resource mobilization.

In recent years, legal environment of statistical work has been consolidated and strengthened by the Law of Statistics that was approved by the National Assembly on 17 June, 2003 and on 26 June, 2003, President of Socialist Republic of Vietnam signed Decree for publishing. Together with the Law of Statistics, Government Decision No 40: stipulation in detail and guidance for implementing the Law of Statistics, and Government Decision No 14: punishment for administrative violation in statistical area has created a set of comprehensive legal basis for statistical operation in Vietnam. In addition, the Government has always paid many attentions, providing comfortable conditions for operations of the GSO. In the first years of 21st century, the GSO has prepared and submitted Direction for Development of Vietnam Statistics to 2010 (DDVS) to Prime Minister for approval, and this Direction was approved by Prime Minister on 21 October, 2002. We consider DDVS to be a long term strategic statistical planning for development of the GSO for the first decade of 21st century.

3. How do we achieve the population census goals?

It has many factors affecting to a success of the population census. In the case of Vietnam, under limitation of resources for the population and housing census, the General Statistics Office has to develop a legal basis for the census by Decision of the Prime Minister on taking the population and housing census. In the Decision, the Prime Minister instructs all related institutions to participate together with the GSO in carrying out the census. At the same time, the Prime Minister also proposes a national

structure of steering committees that will control census operation at various geographic or administrative levels. It is often that entire operation of census is controlled by the Central Census Steering Committee and the Deputy Prime Minister is appointed as Chairperson of this committee and Director General of the GSO is appointed as Deputy - Chairperson. Other members of this committee often include Deputy Minister of Labour, invalid and Social Affairs, Deputy Minister of Home Affairs, Deputy Minister of Finance.

The same kind of steering committees are set up in all Provinces/ cities and Districts. At the provincial level, the Deputy Chairperson of the Provincial People's Committee is appointed to chair the steering committee. The Director of the Provincial Statistics Office serves as Deputy Chairperson. Members are drawn from the heads of the various Departments in provinces/cities, including Labour, Home Affairs, Finance, Public Health and Culture. A similar structure is adopted in establishing the steering committee at the District level.

The establishment of the census steering committee ensures full participation at all levels in the country into the population and housing census. In other words, the said national structure ensures the coordination of other part of government to achieve the goals of census.

Vietnam is developing country and there are shortages of tools, skills in carrying out of census, especially in data processing. One experiences of the GSO is that we are often taken on the distribution of data processing facilities. Some equipments and trained staffs are available in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh cities - two centers of country. To tap these resources and to effect a geographically equitable distribution of the processing workload, we often established three regional centers at Ha Noi in the North, Da Nang in the central country and Ho Chi Minh city in the South. These centers will be responsible for much of the processing for provinces assigned to them. Establishment of the three regional centers has some number of benefits:

- i. It enables the census to tap the existing skills and experiences of staff;
- ii. The distribution of work will increase the speed and efficiency of processing;
- iii. It enables full advantage to be taken of local knowledge; and
- iv. It will lead to the development of regional computing and other technical facilities and capabilities that will benefit future work of the GSO.

In order to get our staff to adopt an innovative mindset, training plays an important role in the case of our country. Training both overseas and in country is very intensive and cover a wide range of engineering, programming and systems analysis skills and in the 2009 census, we have plan to use scanning technique in data entry. Oversea training provides an opportunity to observe a modern computing environment and precious experiences of other countries. Even more important is the in-country training, especially given the need for training at the three regional centers and as in the past, the large number of skilled personnel was trained in a very short time. We realize that training should be seen as a continuous function. For example, in the 1999 census, courses were conducted in systems design and management, supervision of data entry, quality control and systems management, etc.

The publicity of population census is also an important factor to ensure the success of census. In Vietnam, the actual census is always accompanied by a massive publicity programme. For example, in the last census, a number of strategies were adopted. One of the most effective was the preparation of material for use in schools. Active participation by the Ministry of Education ensured that schools students were knowledgeable about the census and were encouraged to discuss what they knew with their parents and friends. Another important strategy was to involve as many people as possible in discussion about the census. The widespread involvement of the People's Committees played a prominent role in building up the momentum of publicity as the census day approached. These two strategies helped the census to penetrate into each family in our country; they were supported by well-orchestrated campaigns in the mass media.

4. The population census is one of the biggest censuses in our country. This census is only conducted successfully in a way of close combination between the GSO and many line ministries and agencies, between the GSO at central level with provincial People's Committee and different kinds of department under Provinces, between the statistical system at all levels with all social strata. Thus, conducting the population census is precious opportunity for the national statistical system to develop human resources, to establish a relationship and way of coordination between the national statistical system with other institutions in society. Especially the population census also provides an opportunity for the national statistical system to draw and accumulate its experiences in making sample selection, designing questionnaire,

carrying out field operation, processing data, analyzing and disseminating result of census and survey. Conducting successfully the population census, the national statistical system has capacity to conduct successfully every different type of census and surveys.

The last population census was held in 1999 and the next one is planned to be held in 2009. At present, the GSO are urgently preparing for the population and housing census in 2009.