

***United Nations Symposium***  
**Global Review of 2000 Round of Population and Housing Censuses:  
Mid-decade Assessment and Future Prospects**

Time: **7-10 August 2001**  
Host: **United Nations Statistics Division**  
Place: **New York**  
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**Purpose**

The purpose of the Symposium is to address the question: “When and under what circumstances do censuses succeed?”<sup>1</sup> The discussions among participants will identify issues and problems that emerged in the current census round (1995-2004) and seek solutions that may serve to guide census planning during the next round (2005-2014). They will also identify national strategies that contribute to the success of censuses with respect to relevance, cost, coverage, timeliness and accuracy.

Each of the sessions below will focus on one or two papers highlighting major issues in specific areas of the agenda. In addition, experts will be requested to provide brief written statements on issues raised in the papers for discussion at the symposium.

The following are the six issues that the symposium will focus on:

**1. Strategies for involving stakeholders in census activities**

What methods do census organizations use to build a consensus among all parties concerned to insure the availability of reliable and timely data for dissemination? Who are the stakeholders i.e. those organisations/offices with interest or concern in census results? What is the role of stakeholders in the collection, dissemination, planning and use of population data? What roles do statistical offices provide to stakeholders in the selection and development of topics to be included in the census questionnaire? What are the methods used to limit topics in the census questionnaire to essentials? Under what conditions are clients’ demands for census information met?

**2. Strategies for choosing among data collection methods as sources of demographic and social statistics: censuses, sample surveys and administrative records**

How can national statistical offices decide upon the most efficient and effective data sources for population and social statistics, taking into account, costs, donors, periodicity, geographic coverage, respondent burden, timeliness, content and statutory considerations?

It is sometimes suggested that it may not be necessary to continue conducting censuses because other alternative sources can provide the required information. Another

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<sup>1</sup> Success of census activities, in a country, may be measured by the level of adherence to the “Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics”, refer to E/CN.3/1994/18, United Nations, New York (1994).

school of thought argues for complementing the census with other alternative sources of information such as sample surveys and administrative records. This session compares the pros and cons of implementing traditional censuses versus alternative methods and strategies of data collection.

### **3. Adapting new technologies to census operations**

It is difficult to anticipate all the necessary administrative and methodological requirements of applying new technology in the conduct of censuses. How should countries make informed choices in selecting appropriate technology? There are also problems related to high cost of equipment, access to maintenance, and lack of necessary expertise. What are the most appropriate methods, so far tried, to effectively adapt to the emerging demands for new technologies while maintaining the integrity of the existing data collection systems? How should outsourcing, of some census activities such as data processing, be managed? How should confidentiality issues be handled in such circumstances?

### **4. Maintaining census related activities during the intercensal years**

What are the most effective methods census planners have used to manage institutional memory and archiving of census activities? While recognizing that not all structures created during the census can be retained during the intercensal period which core structures and activities should be retained and why? Where are the optimal locations of census materials and archives during the period between censuses? What factors affect the optimization process?

### **5. Identifying and resolving problems of census mapping**

What successful approaches have been adopted by census organizations to improve mapping? Common problems include poorly timed execution of the mapping exercises; lack of adequate training of field staff; treatment of mapping as a completely separate operation from the census; incomplete mapping; outdated maps; generation of poor frames for surveys and lack of a solid base for developing the geographic information system (GIS).

### **6. Post Enumeration Surveys: Are they worth it or not?**

Conventionally, countries have undertaken post enumeration surveys (PES) to evaluate coverage and content errors, however, the administrative and management burden of planning for PES may be taxing, especially, while still managing the larger census activities. A proper PES is, in many cases, constrained by the lack of proper institutional arrangements to facilitate independence of operations from the census activities. Besides, in many instances basic information, e.g. maps, household listings are inaccurate. How have such constraints been minimised? In addition, there may be analytical problems and ambivalence in usage of PES results. For example, what are the various pitfalls and implications of adjusting census results based on the PES? In view of the above, under what conditions is it worth the cost and the trouble to conduct a PES? Does a PES serve the purposes intended?